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THE SUN DIAL PRESS, Inc.
Garden City New York

IRVIN COBB
AT HIS BEST

43493

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Garden City New York

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To
WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I

"SPEAKING OF OPERATIONS—"

I

"SPEAKING OF OPERATIONS—"

NOW that the last belated bill for services professionally rendered has been properly paid and properly receipted; now that the memory of the event, like the mark of the stitches, has faded out from a vivid red to a becoming pink shade; now that I pass a display of adhesive tape in a drug-store window without flinching—I sit me down to write a little piece about a certain matter—a small thing, but mine own—to wit, That Operation.

For years I have noticed that persons who underwent pruning or remodeling at the hands of a duly qualified surgeon, and survived, like to talk about it afterward. In the event of their not surviving I have no doubt they still liked to talk about it, but in a different locality. Of all the readily available topics for use, whether among friends or among strangers, an operation seems to be the handiest and most dependable. It beats the Tariff, or Roosevelt, or Bryan, or when this war is going to end, if

ever, if you are a man talking to other men; and it is more exciting even than the question of how Mrs. Vernon Castle will wear her hair this season, if you are a woman talking to other women.

For mixed companies a whale is one of the best and the easiest things to talk about that I know of. In regard to whales and their peculiarities you can make almost any assertion without fear of successful contradiction. Nobody ever knows any more about them than you do. You are not hampered by facts. If someone mentions the blubber of the whale and you chime in and say it may be noticed for miles on a still day when the large but emotional creature has been moved to tears by some great sorrow coming into its life, everybody is bound to accept the statement. For after all how few among us really know whether a distressed whale sobs aloud or does so under its breath? Who, with any certainty, can tell whether a mother whale hatches her own egg her own self or leaves it on the sheltered bosom of a fjord to be incubated by the gentle warmth of the midnight sun? The possibilities of the proposition for purposes of informal debate, pro and con, are apparent at a glance.

The weather, of course, helps out amazingly when you are meeting people for the first time, because there is nearly always more or less weather going on somewhere and practically everybody has ideas about it. The

human breakfast is also a wonderfully good topic to start up during one of those lulls. Try it yourself the next time the conversation seems to drag. Just speak up in an offhand kind of way and say that you never care much about breakfast—a slice of toast and a cup of weak tea start you off properly for doing a hard day's work. You will be surprised to note how things liven up and how eagerly all present join in. The lady on your left feels that you should know she always takes two lumps of sugar and nearly half cream, because she simply cannot abide hot milk, no matter what the doctors say. The gentleman on your right will be moved to confess he likes his eggs boiled for exactly three minutes, no more and no less. Buckwheat cakes and sausage find a champion and oatmeal rarely lacks a warm defender.

But after all, when all is said and done, the king of all topics is operations. Sooner or later, wherever two or more are gathered together, it is reasonably certain that somebody will bring up an operation.

Until I passed through the experience of being operated on myself, I never really realized what a precious conversational boon the subject is, and how great a part it plays in our intercourse with our fellow beings on this planet. To the teller it is enormously interesting, for he is not only the hero of the tale but the rest of the cast and the stage setting as well—the

whole show, as they say; and if the listener has had a similar experience—and who is there among us in these days that has not taken a nap 'neath the shade of the old ether cone?—it acquires a doubled value.

"Speaking of operations ——," you say, just like that, even though nobody present has spoken of them; and then you are off, with your new acquaintance sitting on the edge of his chair, or hers as the case may be and so frequently is, with hands clutched in polite but painful restraint, gills working up and down with impatience, eyes brightened with desire, tongue hung in the middle, waiting for you to pause to catch your breath, so that he or she may break in with a few personal recollections along the same line. From a mere conversation it resolves itself into a symptom symposium, and a perfectly splendid time is had by all.

If an operation is such a good thing to talk about, why isn't it a good thing to write about, too? That is what I wish to know. Besides, I need the money. Verily, one always needs the money when one has but recently escaped from the ministering clutches of the modern hospital. Therefore I write.

It all dates back to the fair, bright morning when I went to call on a prominent practitioner here in New York, whom I shall denominate as Doctor X. I had a pain. I had had it for days. It was not a dependable, locatable pain, such as a tummyache or a toothache is,

which you can put your hand on; but an indefinite, unsettled, undecided kind of pain, which went wandering about from place to place inside of me like a strange ghost lost in Cudjo's Cave. I never knew until then what the personal sensations of a haunted house are. If only the measly thing could have made up its mind to settle down somewhere and start light housekeeping I think I should have been better satisfied. I never had such an uneasy tenant. Alongside of it a woman with the moving fever would be comparatively a fixed and stationary object.

Having always, therefore, enjoyed perfectly riotous and absolutely unbridled health, never feeling weak and distressed unless dinner happened to be ten or fifteen minutes late, I was green regarding physicians and the ways of physicians. But I knew Doctor X slightly, having met him last summer in one of his hours of ease in the grand stand at a ball game, when he was expressing a desire to cut the umpire's throat from ear to ear, free of charge; and I remembered his name, and remembered, too, that he had impressed me at the time as being a person of character and decision and scholarly attainments.

He wore whiskers. Somehow in my mind whiskers are ever associated with medical skill. I presume this is a heritage of my youth, though I believe others labor under the same impression. As I look back it seems to me that

in childhood's days all the doctors in our town wore whiskers.

I recall one old doctor down there in Kentucky who was practically lurking in ambush all the time. All he needed was a few decoys out in front of him and a pump gun to be a duck blind. He carried his calomel about with him in a fruit jar, and when there was a cutting job he stropped his scalpel on his bootleg.

You see, in those primitive times germs had not been invented yet, and so he did not have to take any steps to avoid them. Now we know that loose, luxuriant whiskers are unsanitary, because they make such fine winter quarters for germs; so, though the doctors still wear whiskers, they do not wear them wild and waving. In the profession bosky whiskers are taboo; they must be landscaped. And since it is a recognized fact that germs abhor orderliness and straight lines they now go elsewhere to reside, and the doctor may still retain his traditional aspect and yet be practically germproof. Doctor X was trimmed in accordance with the ethics of the newer school. He had trellis whiskers. So I went to see him at his offices in a fashionable district, on an expensive side street.

Before reaching him I passed through the hands of a maid and a nurse, each of whom spoke to me in a low, sorrowful tone of voice, which seemed to indicate that there was very little hope.

I reached an inner room where Doctor X was. He looked me over, while I described for him as best I could what seemed to be the matter with me, and asked me a number of intimate questions touching on the lives, works, characters and peculiarities of my ancestors; after which he made me stand up in front of him and take my coat off, and he punched me hither and yon with his forefinger. He also knocked repeatedly on my breastbone with his knuckles, and each time, on doing this, would apply his ear to my chest and listen intently for a spell, afterward shaking his head in a disappointed way. Apparently there was nobody at home. For quite a time he kept on knocking, but without getting any response.

He then took my temperature and fifteen dollars, and said it was an interesting case—not unusual exactly, but interesting—and that it called for an operation.

From the way my heart and other organs jumped inside of me at that statement I knew at once that, no matter what he may have thought, the premises were not unoccupied. Naturally I inquired how soon he meant to operate. Personally I trusted there was no hurry about it. I was perfectly willing to wait for several years, if necessary. He smiled at my ignorance.

"I never operate," he said; "operating is entirely out of my line. I am a diagnostician."

He was, too—I give him full credit for that. He was a good, keen, close diagnostician. How did he know I had only fifteen dollars on me? You did not have to tell this man what you had, or how much. He knew without being told.

I asked whether he was acquainted with Doctor Y—, Y being a person whom I had met casually at a club to which I belong. Oh, yes, he said, he knew Doctor Y. Y was a clever man, X said—very, very clever; but Y specialized in the eyes, the ears, the nose and the throat. I gathered from what Doctor X said that any time Doctor Y ventured below the thorax he was out of bounds and liable to be penalized; and that if by any chance he strayed down as far as the lungs he would call for help and back out as rapidly as possible.

This was news to me. It would appear that these up-to-date practitioners just go ahead and divide you up and partition you out among themselves without saying anything to you about it. Your torso belongs to one man and your legs are the exclusive property of his brother practitioner down on the next block, and so on. You may belong to as many as half a dozen specialists, most of whom, very possibly, are total strangers to you, and yet never know a thing about it yourself.

It has rather the air of trespass—nay, more than that, it bears some of the aspects of unlawful entry—but I suppose it is legal. Certainly judging by what I am able to learn, the system

is being carried on generally. So it must be ethical.

Anything doctors do in a mass is ethical. Almost anything they do singly and on individual responsibility is unethical. Being ethical among doctors is practically the same thing as being a Democrat in Texas or a Presbyterian in Scotland.

"Y will never do for you," said Doctor X when I had rallied somewhat from the shock of these disclosures. "I would suggest that you go to Doctor Z, at such-and-such an address. You are exactly in Z's line. I'll let him know that you are coming and when, and I'll send him down my diagnosis."

So that same afternoon, the appointment having been made by telephone, I went, full of quavery emotions, to Doctor Z's place. As soon as I was inside his outer hallway I realized that I was nearing the presence of one highly distinguished in his profession.

A pussy-footed male attendant, in a livery that made him look like a cross between a headwaiter and an undertaker's assistant, escorted me through an anteroom into a reception-room, where a considerable number of well-dressed men and women were sitting about in strained attitudes, pretending to read magazines while they waited their turns, but in reality furtively watching one another.

I sat down in a convenient chair, adhering fast to my hat and my umbrella. They were

the only friends I had there and I was determined not to lose them without a struggle. On the wall were many colored charts showing various portions of the human anatomy and what ailed them. Directly in front of me was a very thrilling illustration, evidently copied from an oil painting, of a liver in a bad state of repair. I said to myself that if I had a liver like that one I should keep it hidden from the public eye—I would never permit it to sit for its portrait. Still, there is no accounting for tastes. I know a man who got his spleen back from the doctors and now keeps it in a bottle of alcohol on the what-not in the parlor, as one of his most treasured possessions, and sometimes shows it to visitors. He, however, is of a saving disposition.

Presently a lady secretary, who sat behind a roll-top desk in a corner of the room, lifted a forefinger and silently beckoned me to her side. I moved over and sat down by her; she took down my name and my age and my weight and my height, and a number of other interesting facts that will come in very handy should anyone ever be moved to write a complete history of my early life. In common with Doctor X she shared one attribute—she manifested a deep curiosity regarding my forefathers—wanted to know all about them. I felt that this was carrying the thing too far. I felt like saying to her:

"Miss or madam, so far as I know there is

nothing the matter with my ancestors of the second and third generations back, except that they are dead. I am not here to seek medical assistance for a grandparent who succumbed to disappointment that time when Samuel J. Tilden got counted out, or for a great-grandparent who entered into Eternal Rest very unexpectedly and in a manner entirely uncalled for as a result of being an innocent bystander in one of those feuds that were so popular in my native state immediately following the Mexican War. Leave my ancestors alone. There is no need of your shaking my family tree in the belief that a few overripe patients will fall out. I alone—I, me, myself—am the present candidate!"

However, I refrained from making this protest audibly. I judged she was only going according to the ritual; and as she had a printed card, with blanks in it ready to be filled out with details regarding the remote members of the family connection, I humored her along.

When I could not remember something she wished to know concerning an ancestor I supplied her with thrilling details culled from the field of fancy. When the card was entirely filled up she sent me back to my old place to wait. I waited and waited, breeding fresh ailments all the time. I had started out with one symptom; now if I had one I had a million and a half. I could feel goose flesh sprouting out all over me. If I had been taller I might

have had more, but not otherwise. Such is the power of the human imagination when the surroundings are favorable to its development.

Time passed; to me it appeared that nearly all the time there was passed and that we were getting along toward the shank-end of the Christian era mighty fast. I was afraid my turn would come next and afraid it would not. Perhaps you know this sensation. You get it at the dentist's, and when you are on the list of after-dinner speakers at a large banquet, and when you are waiting for the father of the Only Girl in the World to make up his mind whether he is willing to try to endure you as a son-in-law.

Then some more time passed.

One by one my companions, obeying a command, passed out through the door at the back, vanishing out of my life forever. None of them returned. I was vaguely wondering whether Doctor Z buried his dead on the premises or had them removed by a secret passageway in the rear, when a young woman in a nurse's costume tapped me on the shoulder from behind.

I jumped. She hid a compassionate smile with her hand and told me that the doctor would see me now.

As I rose to follow her—still clinging with the drowning man's grip of desperation to my hat and my umbrella—I was astonished to note by a glance at the calendar on the wall that

this was still the present date. I thought it would be Thursday of next week at the very least.

Doctor Z also wore whiskers, carefully pointed up by an expert hedge trimmer. He sat at his desk, surrounded by freewill offerings from grateful patients and by glass cases containing other things he had taken away from them when they were not in a condition to object. I had expected, after all the preliminary ceremonies and delays, that we should have a long séance together. Not so; not at all. The modern expert in surgery charges as much for remembering your name between visits as the family doctor used to expect for staying up all night with you, but he does not waste any time when you are in his presence.

I was about to find that out. And a little later on I was to find out a lot of other things; in fact, that whole week was of immense educational value to me.

I presume it was because he stood so high in his profession, and was almost constantly engaged in going into the best society, that Doctor Z did not appear to be the least bit excited over my having picked him out to look into me. In the most perfunctory manner he shook the hand that has shaken the hands of Jess Willard, George M. Cohan and Henry Ford, and bade me be seated in a chair which was drawn up in a strong light, where he might gaze directly at me as we conversed and so get the full values of the composition. But if I

was a treat for him to look at he concealed his feelings very effectually.

He certainly had his emotions under splendid control. But then, of course, you must remember that he probably had traveled about extensively and was used to sight-seeing.

From this point on everything passed off in a most businesslike manner. He reached into a filing cabinet and took out an exhibit, which I recognized as the same one his secretary had filled out in the early part of the century. So I was already in the card-index class. Then briefly he looked over the manifest that Doctor X had sent him. It may not have been a manifest—it may have been an invoice or a bill of lading. Anyhow, I was in the assignee's hands. I could only hope it would not eventually become necessary to call in a receiver. Then he spoke:

"Yes, yes-yes," he said; "yes-yes-yes! Operation required. Small matter—hum, hum! Let's see—this is Tuesday? Quite so. Do it Friday! Friday at"—he glanced toward a scribbled pad of engagement dates at his elbow —"Friday at seven A.M. No; make it seven-fifteen. Have important tumor case at seven. St. Germicide's Hospital. You know the place?—up on Umpty-umph Street. Go' day! Miss Whoziz, call next visitor."

And before I realized that practically the whole affair had been settled I was outside the consultation-room in a small private hall, and

the secretary was telling me further details would be conveyed to me by mail. I went home in a dazed state. For the first time I was beginning to learn something about an industry in which heretofore I had never been interested. Especially was I struck by the difference now revealed to me in the preliminary stages of the surgeons' business as compared with their fellow experts in the allied cutting trades—tailors, for instance, not to mention barbers. Every barber, you know, used to be a surgeon only he spelled it chirurgeon. Since then the two professions have drifted far apart. Even a half-witted barber—the kind who always has the first chair as you come into the shop—can easily spend ten minutes of your time thinking of things he thinks you should have and mentioning them to you one by one, whereas any good, live surgeon knows what you have almost instantly.

As for the tailor—consider how wearisome are his methods when you parallel them alongside the tremendous advances in this direction made by the surgeon—how cumbersome and old-fashioned and tedious! Why, an experienced surgeon has you all apart in half the time the tailor takes up in deciding whether the vest shall fasten with five buttons or six. Our own domestic tailors are bad enough in this regard and the Old World tailors are even worse.

I remember a German tailor in Aix-la-Chapelle in the fall of 1914 who undertook to

build for me a suit suitable for visiting the battle lines informally. He was the most literary tailor I ever met anywhere. He would drape the material over my person and then take a piece of chalk and write quite a nice long piece on me. Then he would rub it out and write it all over again, but more fully. He kept this up at intervals of every other day until he had writer's cramp. After that he used pins. He would pin the seams together uttering little soothing, clucking sounds in German whenever a pin went through the goods and into me. The German cluck is not so soothing as the cluck of the English-speaking peoples, I find.

At the end of two long and trying weeks, which wore both of us down noticeably, he had the job done. It was not an unqualified success. He regarded it as a suit of clothes but I knew better; it was a set of slip covers and if only I had been a two-seated runabout it would have proved a perfect fit, I am sure; but I am a single-seated design and it did not answer. I wore it to the war because I had nothing else to wear that would stamp me as a regular war correspondent, except, of course my wrist watch; but I shall not wear it to another war. War is terrible enough already; and, besides, I have parted with it. On my way home through Holland I gave that suit to a couple of poor Belgian refugees, and I presume they are still wearing it.

So far as I have been able to observe, the surgeons and the tailors of these times share but one common instinct: If you go to a new surgeon or to a new tailor he is morally certain, after looking you over, that the last surgeon you had, or the last tailor, did not do your cutting properly. There, however, is where the resemblance ends. The tailor, as I remarked in effect just now, wants an hour at least in which to decide how he may best cover up and disguise the irregularities of the human form; in much less time than that the surgeon has completely altered the form itself.

With the surgeon it is very much as it is with those learned men who write those large impressive works of reference which should be permanently in every library, and which we are forever buying from an agent because we are so passionately addicted to payments. If the thing he seeks does not appear in the contents proper he knows exactly where to look for it. "See appendix," says the historian to you in a footnote. "See appendix," says the surgeon to himself, the while humming a cheery refrain And so he does.

Well, I went home. This was Tuesday and the operation was not to be performed until the coming Friday. By Wednesday I had calmed down considerably. By Thursday morning I was practically normal again as regards my nerves. You will understand that I was still in a state of blissful ignorance

concerning the actual methods of the surgical profession as exemplified by its leading exponents of to-day. The knowledge I have touched on in the pages immediately preceding was to come to me later.

Likewise Doctor Z's manner had been deceiving. It could not be that he meant to carve me to any really noticeable extent—his attitude had been entirely too casual. At our house carving is a very serious matter. Any time I take the head of the table and start in to carve, it is fitting to remove the women and children to a place of safety, and onlookers should get under the table. When we first began housekeeping and gave our first small dinner-party we had a brace of ducks cooked in honor of the company, and I, as host, undertook to carve them. I never knew until then that a duck was built like a watch—that his works were inclosed in a burglarproof case. Without the use of dynamite the Red Leary-O'Brien gang could not have broken into those ducks. I thought so then and I think so yet. Years have passed since then, but I may state that even now, when there are guests for dinner, we do not have ducks. Unless somebody else is going to carve, we have liver.

I mention this fact in passing because it shows that I had learned to revere carving as one of the higher arts, and one not to be approached except in a spirit of due appreciation of the magnitude of the undertaking, and after

proper consideration and thought and reflection and all that sort of thing.

If this were true as regards a mere duck, why not all the more so as regards the carving of a person of whom I am so very fond as I am of myself? Thus I reasoned. And finally, had not Doctor Z spoken of the coming operation as a small matter? Well then?

Thursday at noon I received from Doctor Z's secretary a note stating that arrangements had been made for my admission into St. Germicide that same evening and that I was to spend the night there. This hardly seemed necessary. Still, the tone of the note appeared to indicate that the hospital authorities particularly wished to have me for an overnight guest; and as I reflected that probably the poor things had few enough bright spots in their busy lives, I decided I would humor them along and gladden the occasion with my presence from dinner-time on.

About eight o'clock I strolled in very jauntily. In my mind I had the whole program mapped out. I would stay at the hospital for, say, two days following the operation—or, at most, three. Then I must be up and away. I had a good deal of work to do and a number of people to see on important business, and I could not really afford to waste more than a week-end on the staff of St. Germicide's. After Monday they must look to their own devices for social entertainment. That was my idea.

Now when I look back on it I laugh, but it is a hollow laugh and there is no real merriment in it.

Indeed, almost from the moment of my entrance little things began to come up that were calculated to have a depressing effect on one's spirits. Downstairs a serious-looking lady met me and entered in a book a number of salient facts regarding my personality which the previous investigators had somehow overlooked. There is a lot of bookkeeping about an operation. This detail attended to, a young man, dressed in white garments and wearing an expression that stamped him as one who had suffered a recent deep bereavement, came and relieved me of my hand bag and escorted me upstairs.

As we passed through the upper corridors I had my first introduction to the hospital smell, which is a smell compounded of iodoform, ether, gruel, and something boiling. All hospitals have it, I understand. In time you get used to it, but you never really care for it.

The young man led me into a small room tastefully decorated with four walls, a floor, a ceiling, a window sill and a window, a door and a doorsill, and a bed and a chair. He told me to go to bed. I did not want to go to bed—it was not my regular bedtime—but he made a point of it, and I judged it was according to regulations; so I undressed and put on my night clothes and crawled in. He left me,

taking my other clothes and my shoes with him, but I was not allowed to get lonely.

A little later a ward surgeon appeared, to put a few inquiries of a pointed and personal nature. He particularly desired to know what my trouble was. I explained to him that I couldn't tell him—he would have to see Doctor X or Doctor Z; they probably knew, but were keeping it a secret between themselves.

The answer apparently satisfied him, because immediately after that he made me sign a paper in which I assumed all responsibility for what was to take place the next morning.

This did not seem exactly fair. As I pointed out to him, it was the surgeon's affair, not mine; and if the surgeon made a mistake the joke would be on him and not on me, because in that case I would not be here anyhow. But I signed, as requested, on the dotted line, and he departed.

After that, at intervals, the chief house surgeon dropped in, without knocking, and the head nurse came, and an interne or so, and a ward nurse, and the special nurse who was to have direct charge of me. It dawned on me that I was not having any more privacy in that hospital than a gold-fish.

About eleven o'clock an orderly came, and, without consulting my wishes in the matter, he undressed me until I could have passed almost anywhere for September Morn's father, and gave me a clean shave, twice over, on one of

my most prominent plane surfaces. I must confess I enjoyed that part of it. So far as I am able to recall, it was the only shave I have ever had where the operator did not spray me with cheap perfumery afterward and then try to sell me a bottle of hair tonic.

Having shaved me, the young man did me up amidships in a neat cloth parcel, took his kit under his arm and went away.

It occurred to me that, considering the trivial nature of the case, a good deal of fuss was being made over me by persons who could have no personal concern in the matter whatsoever. This thought recurred to me frequently as I lay there, all tied in a bundle like a week's washing. I did not feel quite so uppish as I had felt. Why was everybody picking on me?

Anon I slept, but dreamed fitfully. I dreamed that a whole flock of surgeons came to my bedside and charted me out in sections, like one of those diagram pictures you see of a beef in the Handy Compendium of Universal Knowledge showing the various cuts and the butcher's pet name for each cut. Each man took his favorite joint and carried it away, and when they were all gone I was merely a recent site, full of reverberating echoes and nothing else.

I have had happier dreams in my time; this was not the kind of dream I should have selected had the choice been left to me.

When I woke the young sun was shining in at the window, and an orderly—not the orderly

who had shaved me, but another one—was there in my room and my nurse was waiting outside the door. The orderly dressed me in a quaint suit of pyjamas cut on the half shell and buttoning stylishly in the back, *princesse mode.* Then he rolled in a flat litter on wheels and stretched me on it, and covered me up with a white tablecloth, just as though I had been cold Sunday-night supper, and we started for the operating-room at the top of the building; but before we started I lit a large black cigar, as Gen. U. S. Grant used to do when he went into battle. I wished by this to show how indifferent I was. Maybe he fooled somebody, but I do not believe I possess the same powers of simulation that Grant had. He must have been a very remarkable man—Grant must.

The orderly and the nurse trundled me out into the hall and loaded me into an elevator which was to carry us up to the top of the hospital. Several other nurses were already in the elevator. As we came aboard one of them remarked that it was a fine day. A fine day for what? She did not finish the sentence.

Everybody wore a serious look. Inside of myself I felt pretty serious too—serious enough for ten or twelve. I had meant to fling off several very bright, spontaneous quips on the way to the table. I thought them out in advance, but now, somehow, none of them seemed appropriate. Instinctively, as it were, I felt that humor was out of place here.

I never knew an elevator to progress from the third floor of a building to the ninth with such celerity as this one on which we were traveling progressed. Personally I was in no mood for haste. If there was anyone else in all that great hospital who was in a particular hurry to be operated on I was perfectly willing to wait. But alas, no! The mechanism of the elevator was in perfect order—entirely too perfect. No accident of any character whatsoever befell us en route, no dropping back into the basement with a low, grateful thud; no hitch; no delay of any kind. We were certainly out of luck that trip. The demon of a joyrider who operated the accursed device jerked a lever and up we soared at a distressingly high rate of speed. If I could have had my way about that youth he would have been arrested for speeding.

Now we were there! They rolled me into a large room, all white, with a rounded ceiling like the inside of an egg. Right away I knew what the feelings of a poor, lonely little yolk are when the spoon begins to chip the shell. If I had not been so busy feeling sorry for myself I think I might have developed quite an active sympathy for yolks.

My impression had been that this was to be in the nature of a private affair, without invitations. I was astonished to note that quite a crowd had assembled for the opening exercises. From his attire and general deportment I judged that Doctor Z was going to be the master

of the revels, he being attired appropriately in a white domino, with rubber gloves and a fancy cap of crash toweling. There were present, also, my diagnostic friend, Doctor X, likewise in fancy-dress costume, and a surgeon I had never met. From what I could gather he was going over the course behind Doctor Z to replace the divots.

And there was an interne in the background, playing caddy, as it were, and a head nurse, who was going to keep the score, and two other nurses, who were going to help her keep it. I only hoped that they would show no partiality, but be as fair to me as they were to Doctor Z, and that he would go round in par.

So they placed me right where my eyes might rest on a large wall cabinet full of very shiny-looking tools; and they took my cigar away from me and folded my hands on the wide bowknot of my sash. Then they put a cloth dingus over my face and a voice of authority told me to breathe. That advice, however, was superfluous and might just as well have been omitted, for such was my purpose anyhow. Ever since I can recall anything at all, breathing has been a regular habit with me. So I breathed. And, at that, a bottle of highly charged sarsaparilla exploded somewhere in the immediate vicinity and most of its contents went up my nose.

I started to tell them that somebody had been fooling with their ether and adulterating

it, and that if they thought they could send me off to sleep with soda pop they were making the mistake of their lives, because it just naturally could not be done; but for some reason or other I decided to put off speaking about the matter for a few minutes. I breathed again—again—agai——

I was going away from there. I was in a large gas balloon, soaring up into the clouds. How pleasant! . . . No, by Jove! I was not in a balloon—I myself was the balloon, which was not quite so pleasant. Besides, Doctor Z was going along as a passenger; and as we traveled up and up he kept jabbing me in the midriff with the ferrule of a large umbrella which he had brought along with him in case of rain. He jabbed me harder and harder. I remonstrated with him. I told him I was a bit tender in that locality and the ferrule of his umbrella was sharp. He would not listen. He kept on jabbing me. . . .

Something broke! We started back down to earth. We fell faster and faster. We fell nine miles, and after that I began to get used to it. Then I saw the earth beneath and it was rising up to meet us.

A town was below—a town that grew larger and larger as we neared it. I could make out the bonded indebtedness, and the Carnegie Library, and the moving-picture palaces, and the new dancing parlor, and other principal points of interest.

At the rate we were falling we were certainly going to make an awful splatter in that town when we hit. I was sorry for the street-cleaning department.

We fell another half mile or so. A spire was sticking up into the sky directly beneath us, like a spear, to impale us. By a supreme effort I twisted out of the way of that spire, only to strike squarely on top of the roof of a greenhouse back of the parsonage, next door. We crashed through it with a perfectly terrific clatter of breaking glass and landed in a bed of white flowers, all soft and downy, like feathers.

And then Doctor Z stood up and combed the débris out of his whiskers and remarked that, taking it by and large, it had been one of the pleasantest little outings he had enjoyed in the entire course of his practice. He said that as a patient I was fair, but as a balloon I was immense. He asked me whether I had seen anything of his umbrella and began looking round for it. I tried to help him look, but I was too tired to exert myself much. I told him I believed I would take a little nap.

I opened a dizzy eye part way. So this was heaven—this white expanse that swung and swam before my languid gaze? No, it could not be—it did not smell like heaven. It smelled like a hospital. It was a hospital. It was my hospital. My nurse was bending over me and I caught a faint whiff of the starch in the front

of her crisp blue blouse. She was two-headed for the moment, but that was a mere detail. She settled a pillow under my head and told me to lie quiet.

I meant to lie quiet; I did not have to be told. I wanted to lie quiet and hurt. I was hurty from head to toe and back again, and crosswise and cater-cornered. I hurt diagonally and lengthwise and on the bias. I had a taste in my mouth like a bird-and-animal store. And empty! It seemed to me those doctors had not left anything inside of me except the acoustics. Well, there was a mite of consolation there. If the overhauling had been as thorough as I had reason to believe it was from my present sensations, I need never fear catching anything again so long as I lived, except possibly dandruff.

I waved the nurse away. I craved solitude. I desired only to lie there in that bed and hurt —which I did.

I had said beforehand I meant to stay in St. Germicide's for two or three days only. It is when I look back on that resolution I emit the hollow laugh elsewhere referred to. For exactly four weeks I was flat on my back. I know now how excessively wearied a man can get of his own back, how tired of it, how bored with it! And after that another two weeks elapsed before my legs became the same dependable pair of legs I had known in the past.

I did not want to eat at first, and when I did begin to want to they would not let me. If

I felt sort of peckish they let me suck a little glass thermometer, but there is not much nourishment really in thermometers. And for entertainment, to wile the dragging hours away, I could count the cracks in the ceiling and read my temperature chart, which was a good deal like Red Ames' batting average for the past season—ranging from ninety-nine to one hundred and four.

Also, through daily conversations with my nurse and with the surgeons who dropped in from time to time to have a look at me, I learned, as I lay there, a great deal about the medical profession—that is, a great deal for a layman—and what I learned filled me with an abiding admiration for it, both as a science and as a business. This surely is one profession which ever keeps its face to the front. Burying its past mistakes and forgetting them as speedily as possible, it pushes straight forward into fresh fields and fresh patients, always hopeful of what the future may bring in the way of newly discovered and highly expensive ailments. As we look backward upon the centuries we are astonished by its advancement. I did a good deal of looking backwards upon the centuries during my sojourn at St. Germicide's.

Take the Middle Ages now—the period when a barber and a surgeon were one and the same. If a man made a failure as a barber he turned his talents to surgery. Surgeons in those times were a husky breed. I judge they worked by

the day instead of by piecework; anyhow the records show they were very fond of experiments, where somebody else furnished the raw material.

When there came a resounding knock at the tradesman's entrance of the moated grange, the lord of the manor, looking over the portcullis and seeing a lusty wight standing down below, in a leather apron, with his sleeves rolled up and a kit of soldering tools under his arm, didn't know until he made inquiry whether the gentle stranger had come to mend the drain or remove the cook's leg.

A little later along, when gunpowder had come into general use as a humanizing factor of civilization, surgeons treated a gunshot wound by pouring boiling lard into it, which I would say was calculated to take the victim's mind off his wound and give him something else to think about—for the time being, anyhow. I assume the notion of applying a mustard plaster outside one's stomach when one has a pain inside one's stomach is based on the same principle.

However, one doesn't have to go clear back to medieval times to note the radical differences in the plan of treating human ailments. A great many persons who are still living can remember when the doctors were not nearly so numerous as they are now. I, for one, would be the last to reverse the sentence and say that because the doctors were not nearly so numer-

ous then as they are now, those persons are still living so numerously.

In the spring of the year, when the sap flowed and the birds mated, the sturdy farmer felt that he was due to have something the matter with him, too. So he would ride into the county-seat and get an almanac. Doubtless the reader, if country raised, has seen copies of this popular work. On the outside cover, which was dark blue in color, there was a picture of a person whose stomach was sliced four ways, like a twenty-cent pie, and then folded back neatly, thus exposing his entire interior arrangements to the gaze of the casual observer. However, this party, judging by his picture, did not appear to be suffering. He did not even seem to fear that he might catch cold from standing there in his own draught. He was gazing off into space in an absent-minded kind of way, apparently not aware that anything was wrong with him; and on all sides he was surrounded by interesting exhibits, such as a crab, and a scorpion, and a goat, and a chap with a bow and arrow—and one thing and another.

Such was the main design of the cover, while the contents were made up of recognized and standard varieties in the line of jokes and the line of diseases which alternated, with first a favorite joke and then a favorite disease. The author who wrote the descriptions of the diseases was one of the most convincing writers

that ever lived anywhere. As a realist he had no superiors among those using our language as a vehicle for the expression of thought. He was a wonder. If a person wasn't particular about what ailed him he could read any page at random and have one specific disease. Or he could read the whole book through and have them all, in their most advanced stages. Then the only thing that could save him was a large dollar bottle.

Again, in attacks of the breakbone ague or malaria it was customary to call in a local practitioner, generally an elderly lady of the neighborhood, who had none of these latter-day prejudices regarding the use of tobacco by the gentler sex. One whom I distantly recall, among childhood's happy memories, carried this liberal-mindedness to a point where she not only dipped snuff and smoked a cob pipe, but sometimes chewed a little natural leaf. This lady, on being called in, would brew up a large caldron of medicinal roots and barks and sprouts and things; and then she would deluge the interior of the sufferer with a large gourdful of this pleasing mixture at regular intervals. It was efficacious, too. The inundated person either got well or else he drowned from the inside. Rocking the patient was almost as dangerous a pastime as rocking the boat. This also helps to explain, I think, why so many of our forebears had floating kidneys. There was nothing else for a kidney to do.

By the time I attained to long trousers, people in our town mainly had outgrown the unlicensed expert and were depending more and more upon the old-fashioned family doctor—the one with the whisker-jungle—who drove about in a gig, accompanied by a haunting aroma of iodoform and carrying his calomel with him in bulk.

He probably owned a secret calomel mine of his own. He must have; otherwise he could never have afforded to be so generous with it. He also had other medicines with him, all of them being selected on the principle that unless a drug tasted like the very dickens it couldn't possibly do you any good. At all hours of the day and night he was to be seen going to and fro, distributing nuggets from his private lode. He went to bed with his trousers and his hat on, I think, and there was a general belief that his old mare slept between the shafts of the gig, with the bridle shoved up on her forehead.

It has been only a few years since the old-time general practitioner was everywhere. Just look round and see now how the system has changed! If your liver begins to misconduct itself the first thought of the modern operator is to cut it out and hide it some place where you can't find it. The old-timer would have bombarded it with a large brunette pill about the size and color of a damson plum. Or he might put you on a diet of molasses seasoned to taste with blue mass and quinine and other attrac-

tive condiments. Likewise, in the spring of the year he frequently anointed the young of the species with a mixture of mutton suet and asafetida. This treatment had an effect that was distinctly depressing upon the growing boy. It militated against his popularity. It forced him to seek his pleasures outdoors, and a good distance outdoors at that.

It was very hard for a boy, however naturally attractive he might be, to retain his popularity at the fireside circle when coated with mutton suet and asafetida and then taken into a warm room. He attracted attention which he did not court and which was distasteful to him. Keeping quiet did not seem to help him any. Even if they had been blindfolded, others would still have felt his presence. A civet-cat suffers from the same drawbacks in a social way, but the advantage to the civet-cat is that as a general thing it associates only with other civet-cats.

Except in the country the old-time, catch-as-catch-can general practitioner appears to be dying out. In the city one finds him occasionally, playing a limit game in an office on a back street—two dollars to come in, five to call; but the tendency of the day is toward specialists. Hence the expert who treats you for just one particular thing. With a pain in your chest, say, you go to a chest specialist. So long as he can keep the trouble confined to your chest, all well and good. If it slips down or slides up he tries to coax it back to the reservation. If it

refuses to do so, he bids it an affectionate adieu, makes a dotted mark on you to show where he left off, collects his bill and regretfully turns you over to a stomach specialist or a throat specialist, depending on the direction in which the trouble was headed when last seen.

Or, perhaps the specialist to whom you take your custom is an advocate of an immediate operation for such cases as yours and all others. I may be unduly sensitive on account of having recently emerged from the surgeon's hands, but it strikes me now that there are an awful lot of doctors who take one brief glance at a person who is complaining, and say to themselves that here is something that ought to be looked into right away—and immediately open a bag and start picking out the proper utensils. You go into a doctor's office and tell him you do not feel the best in the world—and he gives you a look and excuses himself, and steps into the next room and begins greasing a saw.

Mind you, in these casual observations as compiled by me while bedfast and here given utterance, I am not seeking to disparage possibly the noblest of professions. Lately I have owed much to it. I am strictly on the doctor's side. He is with us when we come into the world and with us when we go out of it, oftentimes lending a helping hand on both occasions. Anyway, our sympathies should especially go out to the medical profession at this particular time when the anti-vivisectionists

are railing so loudly against the doctors. The anti-vivisection crusade has enlisted widely different classes in the community, including many lovers of our dumb-animal pets—and aren't some of them the dumbest things you ever saw! —especially chow dogs and love birds.

I will admit there is something to be said on both sides of the argument. This dissecting of live subjects may have been carried to extremes on occasions. When I read in the medical journals that the eminent Doctor Somebody succeeded in transferring the interior department of a pelican to a pointer pup, and vice versa, with such success that the pup drowned while diving for minnows, and the pelican went out in the back yard and barked himself to death baying at the moon, I am interested naturally; but, possibly because of my ignorance, I fail to see wherein the treatment of infantile paralysis has been materially advanced. On the other hand, I would rather the kind and gentle Belgian hare should be offered up as a sacrifice upon the operating table and leave behind him a large family of little Belgian heirs and heiresses—dependent upon the charity of a cruel world—than that I should have something painful which can be avoided through making him a martyr. I would rather any white rabbit on earth should have the Asiatic cholera twice than that I should have it just once. These are my sincere convictions, and I will not attempt to disguise them.

Thanks, too, to medical science we know about germs and serums and diets and all that. Our less fortunate ancestors didn't know about them. They were befogged in ignorance. As recently as the generation immediately preceding ours people were unacquainted with the simplest rules of hygiene. They didn't care whether the housefly wiped his feet before he came into the house or not. The gentleman with the drooping, cream-separator mustache was at perfect liberty to use the common drinking cup on the railroad train. The appendix lurked in its snug retreat, undisturbed by the prying fingers of curiosity. The fever-bearing skeeter buzzed and flitted, stinging where he pleased. The germ theory was unfathomed. Suitable food for an invalid was anything the invalid could afford to buy. Fresh air, and more especially fresh night air, was regarded as dangerous, and people hermetically sealed themselves in before retiring. Not daily as at present was the world gladdened by the tidings that science had unearthed some new and particularly unpleasant disease. It never occurred to a mother that she should sterilize the slipper before spanking her offspring. Babies were not reared antiseptically, but just so. Nobody was aware of microbes.

In short, our sires and our grandsires abode in the midst of perils. They were surrounded on all sides by things that are immediately fatal to the human system. Not a single one of

them had a right to pass his second birthday. In the light of what we know, we realize that by now this world should be but a barren waste, dotted at frequent intervals with large graveyards and populated only by a few dispossessed and hungry bacteria, hanging over the cemetery fence singing: Driven From Home!

In the conditions generally prevalent up to twenty-five years ago, most of us never had any license, really, to be born at all. Yet look how many of us are now here. In this age of research I hesitate to attempt to account for it, except on the entirely unscientific theory that what you don't know doesn't hurt you. Doubtless a physician could give you a better explanation, but his would cost you more than mine has.

But we digress. Let us get back to our main subject, which is myself. I shall never forget my first real meal in that hospital. There was quite a good deal of talk about it beforehand. My nurse kept telling me that on the next day the doctor had promised I might have something to eat. I could hardly wait. I had visions of a tenderloin steak smothered in fried onions, and some French-fried potatoes, and a tall table-limit stack of wheat cakes, and a few other incidental comfits and kickshaws. I could hardly wait for that meal.

The next day came and she brought it to me, and I partook thereof. It was the white of an egg. For dessert I licked a stamp; but this

I did clandestinely and by stealth, without saying anything about it to her. I was not supposed to have any sweets.

On the occasion of the next feast the diet was varied. I had a sip of one of those fermented milk products. You probably know the sort of thing I mean. Even before you've swallowed it, it tastes as though it had already disagreed with you. The nurse said this food was predigested but did not tell me by whom. Nor did I ask her. I started to, but thought better of it. Sometimes one is all the happier for not knowing too much.

A little later on, seeing that I had not suffered an attack of indigestion from this debauch, they gave me junket. In the dictionary I have looked up the definitions of junket. I quote:

JUNKET, *v.* I. *t.* To entertain by feasting; regale. II. *i.* To give or take part in an entertainment or excursion; feast in company; picnic; revel.

JUNKET, *n.* A merry feast or excursion; picnic.

When the author of a dictionary tries to be frivolous he only succeeds in making himself appear foolish.

I know not how it may be in the world at large, but in a hospital, junket is a custard that by some subtle process has been denuded of those ingredients which make a custard fascinating and exciting. It tastes as though the eggs, which form its underlying basis, had been

laid in a fit of pique by a hen that was severely upset at the time.

Hereafter when the junket is passed round somebody else may have my share. I'll stick to the mince pie *à la mode*.

And the first cigar of my convalescence—ah, that, too, abides as a vivid memory! Dropping in one morning to replace the wrappings Doctor Z said I might smoke in moderation. So the nurse brought me a cigar, and I lit it and took one deep puff; but only one. I laid it aside. I said to the nurse:

"A mistake has been made here. I do not want a cooking cigar, you understand. I desire a cigar for personal use. This one is full of herbs and simples, I think. It suggests a New England boiled dinner, and not a very good New England boiled dinner at that. Let us try again."

She brought another cigar. It was not satisfactory either. Then she showed me the box—an orthodox box containing cigars of a recognized and previously dependable brand. I could only conclude that a root-and-herb doctor had bought an interest in the business and was introducing his own pet notions into the formula.

But came a day—as the fancy writers say when they wish to convey the impression that a day has come, but hate to do it in a commonplace manner—came a day when my cigar tasted as a cigar should taste and food had the proper relish to it; and my appetite came back

again and found the old home place not so greatly changed after all.

And then shortly thereafter came another day, when I, all replete with expensive stitches, might drape the customary habiliments of civilization about my attenuated frame and go forth to mingle with my fellow beings. I have been mingling pretty steadily ever since, for now I have something to talk about—a topic good for any company; congenial, an absorbing topic.

I can spot a brother member a block away. I hasten up to him and give him the grand hailing sign of the order. He opens his mouth to speak, but I beat him to it.

"Speaking of operations ——" I say. And then I'm off.

Believe me, it's the life!

II

EATING IN TWO OR THREE LANGUAGES

II

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ON my way home from overseas I spent many happy hours mapping out a campaign. To myself I said: "The day I land is going to be a great day for some of the waiters and a hard day on some of the cooks. Persons who happen to be near by when I am wrestling with my first ear of green corn will think I am playing on a mouth organ. My behavior in regard to hothouse asparagus will be reminiscent of the best work of the late Bosco. In the matter of cantaloupes I rather fancy I shall consume the first two on the half shell, or *au naturel*, as we veteran correspondents say; but the third one will contain about as much vanilla ice cream as you could put in a derby hat.

"And when, as I am turning over my second piece of fried chicken, with Virginia ham, if H. Hoover should crawl out from under it, and, shaking the gravy out of his eyes, should lift a warning hand, I shall say to him: 'Herb,' I

shall say, 'Herb, stand back! Stand well back to avoid being splashed, Herb. Please desist and do not bother me now, for I am busy. Kindly remember that I am but just returned from over there and that for months and months past, as I went to and fro across the face of the next hemisphere that you'll run into on the left of you if you go just outside of Sandy Hook and take the first turn to the right, I have been storing up a great, unsatisfied longing for the special dishes of my own, my native land. Don't try, I pray you, to tell me a patriot can't do his bit and eat it too, for I know better.

" 'Shortly I may be in a fitter frame of mind to listen to your admonitions touching on rationing schemes; but not to-day, and possibly not to-morrow either, Herb. At this moment I consider food regulations as having been made for slaves and perhaps for the run of other people; but not for me. As a matter of fact, what you may have observed up until now has merely been my preliminary attack—what you might call open warfare, with scouting operations. But when they bring on the transverse section of watermelon I shall take these two trenching tools which I now hold in my hands, and just naturally start digging in. I trust you may be hanging round then; you'll certainly overhear something.

" 'Kindly pass the ice water. That's it. Thank you. Join me, won't you, in a brim-

ming beaker? It may interest you to know that I am now on my second carafe of this wholesome, delicious and satisfying beverage. Where I have lately been, in certain parts of the adjacent continent, there isn't any ice, and nobody by any chance ever drinks water. Nobody bathes in it either, so far as I have been able to note. You'll doubtless be interested in hearing what they do with it over on that side. It took me months to find out.

" 'Then, finally, one night in a remote interior village, I went to an entertainment in a Y. M. C. A. hut. A local magician came out on the platform; and after he had done some tricks with cards and handkerchiefs which were so old that they were new all over again, he reached up under the tails of his dress coat and hauled out a big glass globe that was slopping full of its crystal-pure fluid contents, with a family of goldfish swimming round and round in it, as happy as you please.

" 'So then, all in a flash, the answer came and I knew the secret of what the provincials in that section of Europe do with water. They loan it to magicians to keep goldfish in. But I prefer to drink a little of it while I am eating and to eat a good deal while I am drinking it; both of which, I may state, I am now doing to the best of my ability, and without let or hindrance, Herb.' "

To be exactly correct about it, I began mapping out this campaign long before I took ship

for the homeward hike. The suggestion formed in my mind during those weeks I spent in London, when the resident population first went on the food-card system. You had to have a meat card, I think, to buy raw meat in a butcher shop, and you had to have another kind of meat card, I know, to get cooked meat in a restaurant; and you had to have a friend who was a smuggler or a hoarder to get an adequate supply of sugar under any circumstances. Before I left, every one was carrying round a sheaf of cards. You didn't dare go fishing if you had mislaid your worm card.

The resolution having formed, it budded and grew in my mind when I was up near the Front gallantly exposing myself to the sort of table-d'hôte dinners that were available then in some of the lesser towns immediately behind the firing lines; and it kept right on growing, so that by the time I was ready to sail it was full sized. En route, I thought up an interchangeable answer for two of the oldest conundrums of my childhood, one of them being: "Round as a biscuit, busy as a bee; busiest thing you ever did see," and the other, "Opens like a barn door, shuts like a trap; guess all day and you can't guess that." In the original versions the answer to the first was "A watch," and to the second, "A corset"—if I recall aright. But the joint answer I worked out was as follows: "My face!"

Such was the pleasing program I figured out

on shipboard. But, as is so frequently the case with the most pleasing things in life, I found the anticipation rather outshone the realization. Already I detect myself, in a retrospective mood, hankering for the savory *ragouts* we used to get in peasant homes in obscure French villages, and for the meals they gave us at the regimental messes of our own forces, where the cooking was the home sort and good honest American slang abounded.

They called the corned beef Canned Willie; and the stew was known affectionately as Slum, and the doughnuts were Fried Holes. When the adjutant, who had been taking French lessons, remarked, "What the *la* hell does that *sacré-blew* cook mean by serving forty-fours at every meal?" you gathered he was getting a mite tired of baked army beans. And if the lieutenant colonel asked you to pass him the Native Sons you knew he meant he wanted prunes. It was a great life, if you didn't weaken—and nobody did.

But, so far as the joys of the table are concerned, I think I shall be able to wait for quite a spell before I yearn for another whack at English eating. I opine Charles Dickens would be a most unhappy man could he but return to the scenes he loved and wrote about.

Dickens, as will be recalled, specialized in mouth-watering descriptions of good things and typically British things to eat—roast sucking pigs, with apples in their snouts; and baked

goose; and suety plum puddings like speckled cannon balls; and cold game pies as big round as barrel tops—and all such. He wouldn't find these things prevailing to any noticeable extent in his native island in 1918. Even the kidney, the same being the thing for which an Englishman mainly raises a sheep and which he always did know how to serve up better than any one else on earth, somehow didn't seem to be the kidney it once upon a time was when it had the proper sorts of trimmings and sauces to go with it.

At this time England was no place for the epicure. In peacetime English cooks, as a rule, were not what you would call versatile; their range, as it were, was limited. Once, seeking to be blithesome and light of heart, I wrote an article in which I said there were only three dependable vegetables on the average Englishman's everyday menu—boiled potatoes, boiled cabbage, and a second helping of the boiled potatoes.

That was an error on my part; I was unintentionally guilty of the crime of underestimation. I should have added a fourth to the list of stand-bys—to wit: the vegetable marrow. For some reason, possibly because they are a stubborn and tenacious race, the English persist in looking upon the vegetable marrow as an object designed for human consumption, which is altogether the wrong view to take of it. As a foodstuff this article hasn't even the merit

that attaches to stringy celery. You do not derive much nourishment from stale celery, but eating at it polishes the teeth and provides a healthful form of exercise that gives you an appetite for the rest of the meal.

From the vegetable marrow you derive no nourishment, and certainly you derive no exercise; for, being a soft, weak, spiritless thing, it offers no resistance whatever, and it looks a good deal like a streak of solidified fog and tastes like the place where an indisposed carrot spent the night. Next to our summer squash it is the feeblest imitation that ever masqueraded in a skin and called itself a vegetable. Yet its friends over there seem to set much store by it.

Likewise the English cook has always gone in rather extensively for boiling things. When in doubt she boiled. But it takes a lot of retouching to restore to a piece of boiled meat the juicy essences that have been simmered and drenched out of it. After the English people, with such admirable English thoroughness, cut down on fats and oils and bacon garnishments, so that the greases might be conserved for the fighting forces; and since they so largely had to do without imported spices and condiments, because the cargo spaces in the ships coming in were needed for military essentials, the boiled dishes of England appeared to have lost most of their taste.

You could do a lot of browsing about at an English table those days and come away osten-

sibly filled; but inside you there would be a persistent unsatisfied feeling, all the same, which was partly due, no doubt, to the lack of sweetening and partly due to the lack of fats, but due most of all, I think, to a natural disappointment in the results. In the old times a man didn't feel that he had dined well in England unless for an hour or two afterward he had the comfortable gorged sensation of a python full of pigeons.

I shall never forget the first meals I had on English soil, that latest trip. At the port where we landed, in the early afternoon of a raw day, you could get tea if you cared for tea, which I do not; but there was no sugar—only saccharine—to sweeten it with, and no rich cream, or even skim milk, available with which to dilute it. The accompanying buns had a flat, dry, floury taste, and the portions of butter served with them were very homœopathic indeed as to size and very oleomargarinish as to flavor.

Going up to London we rode in a train that was crowded and darkened. Brilliantly illuminated trains scooting across country offered an excellent mark for the aim of hostile air raiders, you know; so in each compartment the gloom was enhanced rather than dissipated by two tiny pin points of a ghastly pale-blue gas flame. I do not know why there should have been two of these lights, unless it was that the second one was added so that by its wan flickerings you could see the first one, and vice versa.

During the trip, which lasted several hours longer than the scheduled running time, we had for refreshments a few gnarly apples, purchased at a way station; and that was all. Recalling the meals that formerly had been served aboard the boat trains of this road, I realized I was getting my preliminary dose of life on an island whose surrounding waters were pestered by U-boats and whose shipping was needed for transport service. But I pinned my gastronomic hopes on London, that city famed of old for the plenteous prodigality of its victualling facilities. In my ignorance I figured that the rigors of rationing could not affect London to any very noticeable extent. A little trimming down here and there, an enforced curtailment in this direction and that—yes, perhaps so; but surely nothing more serious.

Immediately on arrival we chartered a taxicab—a companion and I did. This was not so easy a job as might be imagined by one who formed his opinions on past recollections of London, because, since gasoline was carefully rationed there, taxis were scarce where once they had been numerous. Indeed, I know of no city in which, in antebellum days, taxis were so numerously distributed through almost every quarter of the town as in London. At any busy corner there were almost as many taxicabs waiting and ready to serve you as there are taxicabs in New York whose drivers are cruising about looking for a chance to run over you.

The foregoing is still true of New York, but did not apply to London in war time.

Having chartered our cab, much to the chagrin of a group of our fellow travellers who had wasted precious time getting their heavy luggage out of the van, we rode through the darkened streets to a hotel formerly renowned for the scope and excellence of its cuisine. We reached there after the expiration of the hour set apart under the food regulations for serving dinner to the run of folks. But, because we were both in uniform—he as a surgeon in the British Army, and I as a correspondent—and because we had but newly finished a journey by rail, we were entitled, it seemed, to claim refreshment.

However, he, as an officer, was restricted to a meal costing not to exceed six shillings—and six shillings never did go far in this hotel, even when prices were normal. Not being an officer but merely a civilian disguised in the habiliments of a military man, I, on the other hand, was bound by no such limitations, but might go as far as I pleased. So it was decided that I should order double portions of everything and surreptitiously share with him; for by now we were hungry to the famishing point.

We had our minds set on a steak—a large thick steak served with onions, Desdemona style—that is to say, smothered. It was a pretty thought, a passing fair conception—but a vain one.

"No steaks to-night, sir," said the waiter sorrowfully.

"All right, then," one of us said. "How about chops—fat juicy chops?"

"Oh, no, sir; no chops, sir," he told us.

"Well then, what have you in the line of red meats?"

He was desolated to be compelled to inform us that there were no red meats of any sort to be had, but only sea foods. So we started in with oysters. Personally I have never cared deeply for the European oyster. In size he is anæmic and puny as compared with his brethren of the eastern coast of North America; and, moreover, chronically he is suffering from an acute attack of brass poisoning. The only way by which a novice may distinguish a bad European oyster from a good European oyster is by the fact that a bad one tastes slightly better than a good one does. In my own experience I have found this to be the one infallible test.

We had oysters until both of us were full of verdigris, and I, for one, had a tang in my mouth like an antique bronze jug; and then we proceeded to fish. We had fillets of sole, which tasted as they looked—flat and a bit flabby. Subsequently I learned that this lack of savor in what should be the most toothsome of all European fishes might be attributed to an insufficiency of fat in the cooking; but at the moment I could only believe the trip up from Dover had given the poor thing a touch of car

sickness from which he had not recovered before he reached us.

After that we had lobsters, half-fare size, but charged for at the full adult rates. And, having by now exhausted our capacity for sea foods, we wound up with an alleged dessert in the shape of three drowned prunes apiece, the remains being partly immersed in a palish custardlike composition that was slightly sour.

"Never mind," I said to my indignant stomach as we left the table—"Never mind! I shall make it all up to you for this mistreatment at breakfast to-morrow morning. We shall rise early—you and I—and with loud gurgling cries we shall leap headlong into one of those regular breakfasts in which the people of this city and nation specialize so delightfully. Food regulators may work their ruthless will upon the dinner trimmings, but none would dare to put so much as the weight of one impious finger upon an Englishman's breakfast table to curtail its plenitude. Why, next to Magna Charta, an Englishman's breakfast is his most sacred right."

This in confidence was what I whispered to my gastric juices. You see, being still in ignorance of the full scope of the ration scheme in its application to the metropolitan district, and my disheartening experience at the meal just concluded to the contrary notwithstanding, I had my thoughts set upon rashers of crisp Wiltshire bacon, and broad segments of grilled York ham, and fried soles, and lovely plump sausages

bursting from their jackets, and devilled kidneys paired off on a slice of toast, like Noah and his wife crossing the gangplank into the Ark.

Need I prolong the pain of my disclosures by longer withholding the distressing truth that breakfast next morning was a failure too? To begin with, I couldn't get any of those lovely crisp crescent rolls that accord so rhythmically with orange marmalade and strawberry jam. I couldn't get hot buttered toast either, but only some thin hard slabs of war bread, which seemingly had been dry-cured in a kiln. I could have but a very limited amount of sugar—a mere pinch, in fact; and if I used it to tone up my coffee there would be none left for oatmeal porridge. Moreover, this dab of sugar was to be my full day's allowance, it seemed. There was no cream for the porridge either, but, instead, a small measure of skimmed milk so pale in color that it had the appearance of having been diluted with moonbeams.

Furthermore, I was informed that prior to nine-thirty I could have no meat of any sort, the only exceptions to this cruel rule being kippered herrings and bloaters; and in strict confidence the waiter warned me that, for some mysterious reason, neither the kippers nor the bloaters seemed to be up to their old-time mark of excellence just now. From the same source I gathered that it would be highly inadvisable to order fried eggs, because of the lack of sufficient fat in which to cook them. So, as a last resort,

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I ordered two eggs, soft-boiled. They were served upended, English-fashion, in little individual cups, the theory being that in turn I should neatly scalp the top off of each egg with my spoon and then scoop out the contents from Nature's own container.

Now Englishmen are born with the faculty to perform this difficult achievement; they inherit it. But I have known only one American who could perform the feat with neatness and despatch; and, as he had devoted practically all his energies to mastering this difficult alien art, he couldn't do much of anything else, and, except when eggs were being served in the original packages, he was practically a total loss in society. He was a variation of the breed who devote their lives to producing a perfect salad dressing; and you must know what sad affairs those persons are when not engaged in following their lone talent. Take them off of salad dressings and they are just naturally null and void.

In my crude and amateurish way I attacked those eggs, breaking into them, not with the finesse the finished egg burglar would display, but more like a yeggman attacking a safe. I spilt a good deal of the insides of those eggs down over their outsides, producing a most untidy effect; and when I did succeed in excavating a spoonful I generally forgot to season it, or else it was full of bits of shell. Altogether, the results were unsatisfactory and mussy. Rarely have I

eaten a breakfast which put so slight a subsequent strain upon my digestive processes.

Until noon I hung about, preoccupied and surcharged with inner yearnings. There were plenty of things—important things, too, they were—that I should have been doing; but I couldn't seem to fix my mind upon any subject except food. The stroke of midday found me briskly walking into a certain restaurant on the Strand that for many decades has been internationally famous for the quality and the unlimited quantity of its foods, and more particularly for its beef and its mutton. If ever you visited London in peacetime you must remember the place I mean.

The carvers were middle-aged full-ported men, with fine ruddy complexions, and moustaches of the Japanese weeping mulberry or mammoth droop variety. On signal one of them would come promptly to you where you sat, he shoving ahead of him a great trencher on wheels, with a spirit lamp blazing beneath the platter to keep its delectable burden properly hot. It might be that he brought to you a noble haunch of venison or a splendid roast of pork or a vast leg of boiled mutton; or, more likely yet, a huge joint of beef uprearing like a delectable island from a sea of bubbling gravy, with an edging of mashed potatoes creaming up upon its outer reefs.

If, then, you enriched this person with a shilling, or even if you didn't he would take in

his brawny right hand a knife with a blade a foot long, and with this knife he would cut off from the joint a slice about the size and general dimensions of a horseshoer's apron. And if you cared for a second slice, after finishing the first one, the carver felt complimented and there was no extra charge for it. It was his delight to minister to you.

But, alas, on this day when I came with my appetite whetted by my sea voyage, and with an additional edge put upon it by the privations I had undergone since landing, there was to be had no beef at all! Of a sudden this establishment, lacking its roast beef, became to me as the tragedy of Hamlet, the melancholy Dane, would be with Hamlet and Ophelia and her pa and the ghost and the wicked queen, and both the gravediggers, all left out.

When I had seated myself one of the carvers came to me and, with an abased and apologetic air, very different from his jaunty manner of yore, explained in a husky half whisper that I might have jugged hare or I might have boiled codfish, or I might have one of the awful dishes. Anyhow, that was what I understood him to say.

This last had an especially daunting sound, but I suppose I was in a morbid state, anyhow, by now; and so I made further inquiry and ascertained from him that the restrictions applying to the sale of meat did not apply to the more intimate organs of the butchered animals

such as the liver and the heart, and, in the case of a cow, the tripe. But the English, with characteristic bluntness, choose to call one of these in its cooked state an offal dish—pronounced as spelled and frequently tasting as pronounced.

As one who had primed himself for a pound or so of the rib-roast section of a grass-fed steer, I was not to be put off with one of the critter's spare parts, as it were. Nor did the thought of codfish, and especially boiled codfish, appeal to me greatly. I have no settled antipathy to the desiccated tissues of this worthy deep-sea voyager when made up into fish cakes. Moreover that young and adolescent creature, commonly called a Boston scrod, which is a codfish whose voice is just changing, is not without its attractions; but the full-grown species is not a favorite of mine.

To me there has ever been something depressing about an adult codfish. Any one who has ever had occasion to take cod-liver oil—as who, unhappily, has not?—is bound to appreciate the true feelings that must inevitably come to a codfish as he goes to and fro in the deep for years on a stretch, carrying that kind of a liver about with him all the while.

As a last resort I took the jugged hare; but jugged hare was not what I craved. At eventide, returning to the same restaurant, I was luckier. I found mutton on the menu; but, even so, yet another hard blow awaited me.

By reason of the meat-rationing arrangements a single purchaser was restricted to so many ounces a week, and no more. The portion I received in exchange for a corner clipped off my meat card was but a mere reminder of what a portion in that house would have been in the old days.

There had been a time when a sincere but careless diner from up Scotland way, down in London on a visit, would have carried away more than that much on his necktie; which did not matter particularly then, when food was plentiful; and, besides, usually he wore a pattern of necktie which was improved by almost anything that was spilled upon it. But it did matter to me that I had to dine on this hangnail pared from a sheep.

A few days later I partook of a fast at what was supposed to be a luncheon, which the Lord Mayor of London attended, in company with sundry other notables. Earlier readings had led me to expect an endless array of spicy and succulent viands at any table a Lord Mayor might grace with his presence. Such, though, was not the case here. We had eggs for an *entrée;* and after that we had plain boiled turbot, which to my mind is no great shakes of a fish, even when tuckered up with sauces; and after that we had coffee and cigars; and finally we had several cracking good speeches by members of a race whose men are erroneously believed by some Americans to be practically

inarticulate when they get up on their feet and try to talk.

There was a touch of tragedy mingled in with the comedy of the situation in the spectacle of these Englishmen, belonging to a nation of proverbially generous feeders, stinting themselves and cutting the lardings and the sweetenings and the garnishments down to the limit that there might be a greater abundance of solid sustenance forthcoming for their fighting forces.

I do not mean by this that there was any real lack of nourishing provender in London or anywhere else in England that I went. The long queues of waiting patrons in front of the butcher shops during the first few days of my sojourn very soon disappeared when people learned that they could be sure of getting meat of one sort or another, and at a price fixed by law; which was a good thing too, seeing that thereby the extortioner and the profiteer lost their chances to gain unduly through the necessities of the populace. So far as I was able to ascertain, nobody on the island actually suffered—except the present writer of these lines; and he suffered chiefly because he could not restrain himself from comparing the English foods of pre-war periods with the English foods of the hour.

If things were thus in England, what would they be in France? This was the question I repeatedly put to myself. But when I got to

France a surprise awaited me. It was a surprise deferred, because for the first week of my sojourn upon French soil I was the guest of the British military authorities at a château maintained for the entertainment of visiting Americans who bore special credentials from the British Foreign Office.

Here, because Britain took such good and splendid care to provide amply for her men in uniform, there was a wide variety of good food and abundance of it for the guests and hosts alike. I figured, though, that when I had passed beyond the zone of this gracious hospitality there would be slim pickings. Not at all!

In Paris there was to be had all the food and nearly all the sorts of food any appetite, however fastidious, might crave. This was before the French borrowed the card system of ration control in order to govern the consumption of certain of the necessities. Of poultry and of sea foods the only limits to what one might order were his interior capacity and his purse. Of red meats there was seemingly a boundless supply.

One reason for this plenitude lay in the fact that France, to a very great extent, is a self-contained, self-supporting land, which England distinctly is not; and another reason undoubtedly was that the French, being more frugal and careful than their British or their American brethren ever have been, make culinary use of

a great deal of healthful provender which the English-speaking races throw away. Merely by glancing at the *hors d'œuvres* served at luncheon in a medium-priced café in Paris one can get a good general idea of what discriminating persons declined to eat at dinner the night before.

The Parisian garbage collector must work by the day and not by the job. On a piecework contract he would starve to death. And a third reason was that all through the country the peasants, by request of the Government, were slaughtering their surplus beeves and sheep and swine, so there might be more forage for the army horses and more grain available for the flour rations of the soldiers.

In Paris the bread was indifferently poor. An individual was restricted to one medium-sized roll of bread at a meal. Butter was not by any means abundant, and of sugar there was none to be had at all unless the traveller had bethought him to slip a supply into the country with him. The bulk of the milk supply was requisitioned for babies and invalids and disabled soldiers. Cakes or pastries in any form were absolutely prohibited in the public eating places, and, I think, in private homes as well. But of beef and mutton and veal and fowls, and the various products of the humble but widely versatile pig, there was no end, provided you had the inclination plus the price.

And so, though the lack of sugar in one's

food gave one an almost constant craving for something sweet—and incidentally insured a host of friends for anybody who came along with a box of American candy under his arm or a few cakes of sweet chocolate in his pocket —one might take his choice of a wide diversity of fare at any restaurant of the first or second class, and keep well stayed.

In connection with the Paris restaurants I made a most interesting discovery, which was that when France called up her available man power at the time of the great mobilization, the military heads somehow overlooked one group who, for their sins, should have been sent up where bullets and Huns were thickest. The slum gave up its Apache—and a magnificent fighter he is said to have made too! And the piratical cab drivers who formerly infested the boulevards must have answered the summons almost to a man, because only a few of them are left nowadays, and they mainly wear markings to prove they had served in the ranks; but by a most reprehensible error of somebody in authority the typical head waiters of the cafés were spared. I base this assertion upon the fact that all of them appeared to be on duty at the time of my latest visit. If there was a single absentee from the ranks I failed to miss him.

There they were, the same hawk-eyed banditti crew that one was constantly encountering in the old days; and up to all the same old tricks too—such as adding the date of the month

and all the figures of the year into the bill; and such as invariably recommending the most expensive dishes to foreigners; and such as coming to one and bending over one and smiling upon one and murmuring to one: "An' wot will ze gentailman 'ave to-day?"—and then, before the gentailman can answer, jumping right in and telling him what he is going to have, always favoring at least three different kinds of meats for even the lightest meal, and never less than two vegetables, and never once failing to recommend a full bottle of the costliest wine on the premises.

Stress of war had not caused these gentry to forget or forego a single one of the ancient wiles that for half a century their kind has practised upon American tourists and others who didn't care what else they did with their money so long as they were given a chance to spend it for something they didn't particularly want. Yep; those charged with the responsibility of calling up the reserves certainly made a big mistake back yonder in August of 1914. They practised discrimination in the wrong quarter altogether. If any favoritism was to be shown they should have taken the head waiters and left the Apaches at home.

Many's the hard battle that I had with these chaps in 1918. It never failed—not one single, solitary time did it fail—that the functionary who took my order first tried to tell me what my order was going to be, and then, after a

struggle, reluctantly consented to bring me the things I wanted and insisted on having. Never once did he omit the ceremony of impressing it upon me that he would regard it as a deep favor if only I would be so good as to order a whole lobster. I do not think there was anything personal in this; he recommended the lobster because lobster was the most expensive thing he had in stock. If he could have thought of anything more expensive than lobster he would have recommended that.

I always refused—not that I harbor any grudge against lobsters as a class, but because I object to being dictated to by a buccaneer with flat feet, who wears a soiled dickey instead of a shirt, and who is only waiting for a chance to overcharge me or short-change me, or give me bad money, or something. If every other form of provender had failed them the populace of Paris could have subsisted very comfortably for several days on the lobsters I refused to buy in the course of the spring and summer of last year. I'm sure of it.

And when I had firmly, emphatically, yea, ofttimes passionately declined the proffered lobster, he, having with difficulty mastered his chagrin, would seek to direct my attention to the salmon, his motive for this change in tactics being that salmon, though apparently plentiful, was generally the second most expensive item upon the regular menu. Salmon as served in Paris wears a different aspect from the one

commonly worn by it when it appears upon the table here.

Over there they cut the fish through amidships, in cross-sections, and, removing the segment of spinal column, spread the portion flat upon a plate and serve it thus; the result greatly resembling a pair of miniature pink horse collars. A man who knew not the salmon in his native state, or ordering salmon in France, would get the idea that the salmon was bow-legged and that the breast had been sold to some one else, leaving only the hind quarters for him.

Harking back to lobsters, I am reminded of a tragedy to which I was an eyewitness. Nearly every night for a week or more two of us dined at the same restaurant on the Rue de Rivoli. On the occasion of our first appearance here we were confronted as we entered by a large table bearing all manner of special delicacies and cold dishes. Right in the middle of the array was one of the largest lobsters I ever saw, reposing on a couch of water cress and seaweed, arranged upon a serviette. He made an impressive sight as he lay there prone upon his stomach, fidgeting his feelers in a petulant way.

We two took seats near by. At once the silent signal was given signifying, in the cipher code, "Americans in the house!" And the *maître d'hôtel* came to where he rested and, grasping him firmly just back of the armpits, picked him up and brought him over to us and

invited us to consider his merits. When we had singly and together declined to consider the proposition of eating him in each of the three languages we knew—namely, English, bad French and profane—the master sorrowfully returned him to his bed.

Presently two other Americans entered and immediately after them a party of English officers, and then some more Americans. Each time the boss would gather up the lobster and personally introduce him to the newcomers, just as he had done in our case, by poking the monster under their noses and making him wriggle to show that he was really alive and not operated by clockwork, and enthusiastically dilating upon his superior attractions, which, he assured them, would be enormously enhanced if only *messieurs* would agree forthwith to partake of him in a broiled state. But there were no takers; and so back again he would go to his place by the door, there to remain till the next prospective victim arrived.

We fell into the habit of going to this place in the evenings in order to enjoy repetitions of this performance while dining. The lobster became to us as an old friend, a familiar acquaintance. We took to calling him Jess Willard, partly on account of his reach and partly on account of his rugged appearance, but most of all because his manager appeared to have so much trouble in getting him matched with anybody.

Half a dozen times a night, or oftener, he travelled under escort through the dining room, always returning again to his regular station. Along about the middle of the week he began to fail visibly. Before our eyes we saw him fading. Either the artificial life he was leading or the strain of being turned down so often was telling upon him. It preyed upon his mind, as we could discern by his morose expression. It sapped his splendid vitality as well. No longer did he expand his chest and wave his numerous extremities about when being exhibited before the indifferent eyes of possible investors, but remained inert, logy, gloomy, spiritless—a melancholy spectacle indeed.

It now required artificial stimulation to induce him to display even a temporary interest in his surroundings. With a practised finger, his keeper would thump him on the tenderer portions of his stomach, and then he would wake up; but it was only for a moment. He relapsed again into his lamentable state of depression and languor. By every outward sign here was a lobster that fain would withdraw from the world. But we knew that for him there was no opportunity to do so; on the hoof he represented too many precious francs to be allowed to go into retirement.

Coming on Saturday night we realized that for our old friend the end was nigh. His eyes were deeply set about two-thirds of the way back toward his head and with one

listless claw he picked at the serviette. The summons was very near; the dread inevitable impended.

Sunday night he was still present, but in a greatly altered state. During the preceding twenty-four hours his brave spirit had fled. They had boiled him then; so now, instead of being green, he was a bright and varnished red all over, the exact color of Truck Six in the Paducah Fire Department.

We felt that we who had been sympathizers at the bedside during some of his farewell moments owed it to his memory to assist in the last sad rites. At a perfectly fabulous price we bought the departed and undertook to give him what might be called a personal interment; but he was a disappointment. He should have been allowed to take the veil before misanthropy had entirely undermined his health and destroyed his better nature, and made him, as it were, morbid. Like Harry Leon Wilson's immortal Cousin Egbert, he could be pushed just so far, and no farther.

Before I left Paris the city was put upon bread cards. The country at large was supposed to be on bread rations too; but in most of the smaller towns I visited the hotel keepers either did not know about the new regulation or chose to disregard it. Certainly they generally disregarded it so far as we were concerned. For all I know to the contrary, though, they were restricting their ordinary patrons to the

ordained quantities and making an exception in the case of our people. It may have been one of their ways of showing a special courtesy to representatives of an allied race. It would have been characteristic of these kindly provincial innkeepers to have done just that thing.

Likewise, one could no longer obtain cheese in a first-grade Paris restaurant or aboard a French dining car, though cheese was to be had in unstinted quantity in the rural districts and in the Paris shops; and, I believe, it was also procurable in the cafés of the Parisian working classes, provided it formed a part of a meal costing not more than five francs, or some such sum. In a first-rate place it was, of course, impossible to get any sort of meal for five francs, or ten francs either; especially after the ten per cent luxury tax had been tacked on.

In March prices at the smarter café eating places had already advanced, I should say, at least one hundred per cent above the customary pre-war rates; and by midsummer the tariffs showed a second hundred per cent increase in delicacies, and one of at least fifty per cent in staples, which brought them almost up to the New York standards. Outside of Paris prices continued to be moderate and fair.

Just as I was about starting on my last trip to the Front before sailing for home official announcement was made that dog biscuits would shortly be advanced in price to a well-nigh prohibitive figure. So I presume that very

shortly thereafter the head waiters began offering dog biscuits to American guests. I knew they would do so, just as soon as a dog biscuit cost more than a lobster did.

Until this trip I never appreciated what a race of perfect cooks the French are. I thought I did, but I didn't. One visiting the big cities or stopping at show places and resorts along the main lines of motor and rail travel in peacetime could never come to a real and due appreciation of the uniformly high culinary expertness of the populace in general. I had to take campaigning trips across country into isolated districts lying well off the old tourist lanes to learn the lesson. Having learned it, I profited by it.

No matter how small the hamlet or how dingy appearing the so-called hotel in it might be, we were sure of getting satisfying food, cooked agreeably and served to us by a friendly, smiling little French maiden, and charged for at a most reasonable figure, considering that generally the town was fairly close up to the fighting lines and the bringing in of supplies for civilians' needs was frequently subordinated to the handling of military necessities.

Indeed, the place might be almost within range of the big guns and subjected to bombing outrages by enemy airmen, but somehow the local Boniface managed to produce food ample for our desires, and most appetizing besides. His larder might be limited, but his good nature,

like his willingness and his hospitality, was boundless.

I predicted there was going to be an era of better cooking in America before very long. Our soldiers, returning home, were going to demand a tastier and more diversified fare than many of them enjoyed before they put on khaki and went overseas; and they were going to get it, too. Remembering what they had to eat under French roofs, they would never again be satisfied with meats fried to death, with soggy vegetables, with underdone breads.

Sometimes as we went scouting about on our roving commission to see what we might see, at mealtime we would enter a community too small to harbor within it any establishment calling itself a hotel. In such a case this, then, would be our procedure: We would run down to the railroad crossing and halt at the door of the inevitable *Café de la Station*, or, as we should say in our language, the Last Chance Saloon; and of the proprietor we would inquire the name and whereabouts of some person in the community who might be induced, for a price, to feed a duet or a trio of hungry correspondents.

At first, when we were green at the thing, we sometimes tried to interrogate the local gendarme; but complications, misunderstandings, and that same confusion of tongues which spoiled so promising a building project one time at the Tower of Babel always ensued.

Central Europe has a very dense population, as the geographies used to tell us; but the densest ones get on the police force.

So when by bitter experience we had learned that the gendarme never by any chance could get our meaning and that we never could understand his gestures, we hit upon the wise expedient of going right away to the Last Chance for information.

At the outset I preferred to let one of my companions conduct the inquiry; but presently it dawned upon me that my mode of speech gave unbounded joy to my provincial audiences, and I decided that if a little exertion on my part brought a measure of innocent pleasure into the lives of these good folks it was my duty, as an Ally, to oblige whenever possible.

I came to realize that all these years I have been employing the wrong vehicle when I strive to dash off whimsicalities, because frequently my very best efforts, as done in English, have fallen flat. But when in some remote village I, using French, uttered the simplest and most commonplace remark to a French tavern keeper, with absolutely no intent or desire whatsoever, mind you, to be humorous or facetious, invariably he would burst instantly into peals of unbridled merriment.

Frequently he would call in his wife or some of his friends to help him laugh. And then, when his guffaws had died away into gentle chuckles, he would make answer; and if he

spoke rapidly, as he always did, I would be swept away by the freshets of his eloquence and left gasping far beyond my depth.

That was why, when I went to a *revue* in Paris, I hoped they'd have some good tumbling on the bill.

I understand French, of course, curiously enough, but not as spoken. I likewise have difficulty in making out its meaning when I read it; but in other regards I flatter myself that my knowledge of the language is quite adequate. Certainly, as I have just stated, I managed to create a pleasant sensation among my French hearers when I employed it in conversation.

As I was saying, the general rule was that I should ask the name and whereabouts of a house in the town where we might procure victuals; and then, after a bit, when the laughing had died down, one of my companions would break in and find out what we wanted to know.

The information thus secured probably led us to a tiny cottage of mud-daubed wattles. Our hostess there might be a shapeless, wrinkled, clumsy old woman. Her kitchen equipment might be confined to an open fire and a spit, and a few battered pots.

Her larder might be most meagrely circumscribed as to variety, and generally was. But she could concoct such savory dishes for us—such marvellous, golden-brown fried potatoes; such good soups; such savory omelets; such

toothsome fragrant stews! Especially such stews!

For all we knew—or cared—the meat she put into her pot might have been horse meat and the garnishments such green things as she had plucked at the roadside; but the flavor of the delectable broth cured us of any inclinations to make investigation as to the former stations in life of its basic constituents. I am satisfied that, chosen at random, almost any peasant housewife of France can take an old Palm Beach suit and a handful of potherbs and, mingling these together according to her own peculiar system, turn out a *ragoût* fit for a king. Indeed, it would be far too good for some kings I know of.

And if she had a worn-out bath sponge and the cork of a discarded vanilla-extract bottle she, calling upon her hens for a little help in the matter of eggs, could produce for dessert a delicious meringue, with floating-island effects in it. I'd stake my life on her ability to deliver.

If, on such an occasion as the one I have sought to describe, we were perchance in the south of France or in the Côte-d'Or country, lying over toward the Swiss border, we could count upon having a bait of delicious strawberries to wind up with. But if perchance we had fared into one of the northeastern provinces we were reasonably certain the meal would be rounded out with helpings of a certain kind of cheese that is indigenous to those parts. It

comes in a flat cake, which invariably is all caved in and squashed out, as though the cheese-maker had sat upon it while bringing it into the market in his two-wheeled cart.

Likewise, when its temperature goes up, it becomes more of a liquid than a solid; and it has an aroma by virtue of which it secures the attention and commands the respect of the most casual passer-by. It is more than just cheese. I should call it mother-of-cheese. It is to other and lesser cheeses as civet cats are to canary birds—if you get what I mean; and in its company the most boisterous Brie or the most vociferous Camembert you ever saw becomes at once deaf and dumb.

Its flavor is wonderful. Mainly it is found in ancient Normandy; and, among strangers, eating it—or, when it is in an especially fluid state, drinking it—comes under the head of outdoor sports. But the natives take it right into the same house with themselves.

And, no matter where we were—in Picardy, in Brittany, in the Vosges or the Champagne, as the case might be—we had wonderful crusty bread and delicious butter and a good light wine to go along with our meal. We would sit at a bare table in the smoky cluttered interior of the old kitchen, with the rafters just over our heads, and with the broken tiles—or sometimes the bare earthen floor—beneath our feet, and would eat our fill.

More times than once or twice or thrice I

have known the mistress of the house at settlement time to insist that we were overpaying her. From a civilian compatriot she would have exacted the last sou of her just due; but, because we were Americans and because our country had sent its sons overseas to help her people save France, she, a representative of the most canny and thrifty class in a country known for the thriftiness of all its classes, hesitated to accept the full amount of the sum we offered her in payment.

She believed us, of course, to be rich—in the eyes of the European peasant all Americans are rich—and she was poor and hard put to it to earn her living; but here was a chance for her to show in her own way a sense of what she, as a Frenchwoman, felt for America. Somehow, the more you see of the French, the less you care for the Germans.

Moving on up a few miles nearer the trenches, we would run into our own people; and then we were sure of a greeting, and a chair apiece and a tin plate and a tin cup apiece at an American mess. I have had chuck with privates and I have had chow with noncoms; I have had grub with company commanders and I have dined with generals—and always the meal was flavored with the good, strong man-talk of the real he-American.

The food was of the best quality and there was plenty of it for all, and some to spare. One reason—among others—why the Yank fought so

well was because he was so well fed between fights.

The very best meals I had while abroad were vouchsafed me during the three days I spent with a front-line regiment as a guest of the colonel of one of our negro outfits. To this colonel a French general, out of the goodness of his heart, had loaned his cook, a whiskered poilu, who, before he became a whiskered poilu, had been the chef in the castle of one of the richest men in Europe.

This genius cooked the midday meals and the dinners; but, because no Frenchman can understand why any one should require for breakfast anything more solid than a dry roll and a dab of honey, the preparation of the morning meal was intrusted to a Southern black boy, who, I may say, was a regular skillet hound. And this gifted youth wrestled with the matutinal ham and eggs and flipped the flapjacks for the headquarters mess.

On a full Southern breakfast and a wonderful French luncheon and dinner a grown man can get through the day very, very well indeed, as I bear witness.

Howsomever, as spring wore into summer and summer ran its course, I began to long with a constantly increasing longing for certain distinctive dishes to be found nowhere except in my native clime; brook trout, for example, and roasting ears, and——Oh, lots of things! So I came home to get them.

And, after I had had them, I often caught myself in the act of thoughtfully dwelling upon the fond remembrances of those spicy fragrant stews eaten in peasant kitchens, and those army doughnuts, and those slices of bacon toasted at daybreak on the lids of mess kits in British dugouts.

I suppose they call contentment a jewel because it is so rare.

III

THE LIFE OF THE PARTY

III

THE LIFE OF THE PARTY

I

IT had been a successful party, most successful. Mrs. Carroway's parties always were successes, but this one nearing its conclusion stood out notably from a long and unbroken Carrowayian record. It had been a children's party; that is to say, everybody came in costume with intent to represent children of any age between one year and a dozen years. But twelve years was the limit; positively nobody, either in dress or deportment, could be more than twelve years old. Mrs. Carroway had made this point explicit in sending out the invitations, and so it had been, down to the last hair ribbon and the last shoe buckle. And between dances they had played at the games of childhood, such as drop the handkerchief, and King William was King James' son and prisoner's base and the rest of them.

The novelty of the notion had been a main contributory factor to its success; that, plus the

fact that nine healthy adults out of ten dearly love to put on freakish garbings and go somewhere. To be exactly truthful, the basic idea itself could hardly be called new, since long before some gifted mind thought out the scheme of giving children's parties for grown-ups, but with her customary brilliancy Mrs. Carroway had seized upon the issues of the day to serve her social purposes, weaving timeliness and patriotism into the fabric of her plan by making it a war party as well. Each individual attending was under pledge to keep a full and accurate tally of the moneys expended upon his or her costume and upon arrival at the place of festivities to deposit a like amount in a repository put in a conspicuous spot to receive these contributions, the entire sum to be handed over later to the guardians of a military charity in which Mrs. Carroway was active.

It was somehow felt that this fostered a worthy spirit of wartime economy, since the donation of a person who wore an expensive costume would be relatively so much larger than the donation of one who went in for the simpler things. Moreover, books of thrift stamps were attached to the favors, the same being children's toys of guaranteed American manufacture.

In the matter of refreshments Mrs. Carroway had been at pains to comply most scrupulously with the existing rationing regulations. As the hostess herself said more than once as she

moved to and fro in a flounced white frock having the exaggeratedly low waistline of the sort of frock which frequently is worn by a tot of tender age, with a wide blue sash draped about her almost down at her knees, and with fluffy skirts quite up to her knees, with her hair caught up in a coquettish blue bow on the side of her head and a diminutive fan tied fast to one of her wrists with a blue ribbon—so many of the ladies who had attained to Mrs. Carroway's fairly well-ripened years did go in for these extremely girlishly little-girly effects—as the hostess thus attired and moving hither and yon she would remark, "If Mr. Herbert Hoover himself were here as one of my guests to-night I am just too perfectly sure he could find absolutely nothing whatsoever to object to!"

It would have required much stretching of that elastic property, the human imagination, to conceive of Mr. Herbert Hoover being there, whether in costume or otherwise, but that was what Mrs. Carroway said and repeated. Always those to whom she spoke came right out and agreed with her.

Now it was getting along toward three-thirty o'clock of the morning after, and the party was breaking up. Indeed for half an hour past, this person or that had been saying it was time, really, to be thinking about going—thus voicing a conviction that had formed at a much earlier hour in the minds of the tenants of the floor below Mrs. Carroway's studio apartment,

which like all properly devised studio apartments was at the top of the building.

It was all very well to be a true Bohemian, ready to give and take, and if one lived down round Washington Square one naturally made allowances for one's neighbors and all that, but half past three o'clock in the morning was half past three o'clock in the morning, and there was no getting round that, say what you would. And besides there were some people who needed a little sleep once in a while even if there were some other people who seemed to be able to go without any sleep; and finally, though patience was a virtue, enough of a good thing was enough and too much was surplusage. Such was the opinion of the tenants one flight down.

So the party was practically over. Mr. Algernon Leary, of the firm of Leary & Slack, counsellors and attorneys at law, with offices at Number Thirty-two Broad Street, was among the very last to depart. Never had Mr. Leary spent a more pleasant evening. He had been in rare form, a variety of causes contributing to this happy state. To begin with, he had danced nearly every dance with the lovely Miss Milly Hollister, for whom he entertained the feelings which a gentleman of ripened judgment, and one who was rising rapidly in his profession, might properly entertain for an entirely charming young woman of reputed means and undoubted social position.

A preposterous ass named Perkins—at least, Mr. Leary mentally indexed Perkins as a preposterous ass—had brought Miss Hollister to the party, but thereafter in the scheme of things Perkins did not count. He was a cipher. You could back him up against a wall and take a rubber-tipped pencil and rub him right out, as it were; and with regards to Miss Hollister that, figuratively, was what Mr. Leary had done to Perkins. Now on the other hand Voris might have amounted to something as a potential rival, but Voris being newly appointed as a police magistrate was prevented by press of official duties from coming to the party; so Mr. Leary had had a clear field, as the saying goes, and had made the most of it, as the other saying goes.

Moreover, Mr. Leary had been the recipient of unlimited praise upon the ingenuity and the uniqueness expressed in his costume. He had not represented a Little Lord Fauntleroy or a Buster Brown or a Boy Scout or a Juvenile Cadet or a Midshipmite or an Oliver Twist. There had been three Boy Scouts present and four Buster Browns and of sailor-suited persons there had been no end, really. But Mr. Leary had chosen to appear as Himself at the Age of Three; and, as the complimentary comment proved, his get-up had reflected credit not alone upon its wearer but upon its designer, Miss Rowena Skiff, who drew fashion pictures for one of the women's magazines. Out of the

goodness of her heart and the depths of her professional knowledge Miss Skiff had gone to Mr. Leary's aid, supervising the preparation of his wardrobe at a theatrical costumer's shop uptown and, on the evening before, coming to his bachelor apartments, accompanied by her mother, personally to add those small special refinements which meant so much, as he now realized, in attaining the desired result.

"Oh, Mr. Leary, I must tell you again how very fetching you do look! Your costume is adorable, really it is; so—so cute and everything. And I don't know what I should have done without you to help in the games and everything. There's no use denying it, Mr. Leary—you were the life of the party, absolutely!"

At least twice during the night Mrs. Carroway had told Mr. Leary this, and now as he bade her farewell she was saying it once more in practically the same words, when Mrs. Carroway's colored maid, Blanche, touched him on the arm.

" 'Scuse me, suh," apologized Blanche, "but the hall man downstairs he send up word jes' now by the elevator man 'at you'd best be comin' right on down now, suh, effen you expects to git a taxicab. He say to tell you they ain't but one taxicab left an' the driver of 'at one's been waitin' fur hours an' he act like he might go way any minute now. 'At's whut the hall man send word, suh."

Blanche had brought his overcoat along and held it up for him, imparting to the service that small suggestion of a ceremonial rite which the members of her race invariably do display when handling a garment of richness of texture and indubitable cost. Mr. Leary let her help him into the coat and slipped largess into her hand, and as he stepped aboard the waiting elevator for the downward flight Mrs. Carroway's voice came fluting to him, once again repeating the flattering phrase: "You surely were the life of the party!"

II

It was fine to have been the life of the party. It was not quite so fine to discover that the taxicab to which he must entrust himself for the long ride up to West Eighty-fifth Street was a most shabby-appearing vehicle, the driver of which, moreover, as Mr. Leary could divine even as he crossed the sidewalk, had wiled away the tedium of waiting by indulgence in draughts of something more potent than the chill air of latish November. Mr. Leary peered doubtfully into the illuminated countenance but dulled eyes of the driver and caught a whiff of a breath alcoholically fragrant, and he understood that the warning relayed to him by Blanche had carried a subtle double meaning. Still, there was no other taxicab to be had. The street might have been a byway in old Pompeii for all the life that moved within it.

Washington Square, facing him, was as empty as a graveyard generally is at this hour, and the semblance of a conventional graveyard in winter-time was helped out by a light snow—the first of the season—sifting down in large damp flakes.

Twice and thrice he repeated the address, speaking each time sharply and distinctly before the meaning seemed to filter into the befogged intellect of the inebriate. On the third rendition the latter roused from where he was slumped down.

"I garcia, Steve," he said thickly. "I garcia firs' time only y' hollowed s'loud I couldn' und'stancher."

So saying he lurched into a semiupright posture and fumbled for the wheel. Silently condemning the curse of intemperance among the working classes of a great city Mr. Leary boarded the cab and drew the skirts of his overcoat down in an effort to cover his knees. With a harsh grating of clutches and an abrupt jerk the taxi started north.

Wobbling though he was upon his perch the driver mechanically steered a reasonably straight course. The passenger leaning back in the depths of the cab confessed to himself he was a trifle weary and more than a trifle sleepy. At thirty-seven one does not dance and play children's games alternately for six hours on a stretch without paying for the exertion in a sensation of let-downess. His head slipped forward on his chest.

III

With a drowsy uncertainty as to whether he had been dozing for hours or only for a very few minutes Mr. Leary opened his eyes and sat up. The car was halted slantwise against a curbing; the chauffeur was jammed down again into a heap. Mr. Leary stepped nimbly forth upon the pavement, feeling in his overcoat pocket for the fare; and then he realized he was not in West Eighty-fifth Street at all; he was not in any street that he remembered ever having seen before in the course of his life. Offhand, though, he guessed he was somewhere in that mystic maze of brick and mortar known as Old Greenwich Village; and, for a further guess, in that particular part of it where business during these last few years had been steadily encroaching upon the ancient residences of long departed Knickerbocker families.

The street in which he stood, for a wonder in this part of town, ran a fairly straight course. At its western foot he could make out through the drifting flakes where a squat structure suggestive of a North River freight dock interrupted the sky line. In his immediate vicinity the street was lined with tall bleak fronts of jobbing houses, all dark and all shuttered. Looking the other way, which would be eastward, he could make out where these wholesale establishments tailed off, to be succeeded by the lower shapes of venerable dwellings adorned

with the dormered windows and the hip roofs which distinguished a bygone architectural period. Some distance off in this latter direction the vista between the buildings was cut across by the straddle-bug structure of one of the Elevated roads. All this Mr. Leary comprehended in a quick glance about him, and then he turned on the culprit cabman with rage in his heart.

"See here, you!" he snapped crossly, jerking the other by the shoulder. "What do you mean by bringing me away off here! This isn't where I wanted to go. Oh, wake up, you!"

Under his vigorous shaking the driver slid over sideways until he threatened to decant himself out upon Mr. Leary. His cap falling off exposed the blank face of one who for the time being has gone dead to the world and to all its carking cares, and the only response he offered for his mishandling was a deep and sincere snore. The man was hopelessly intoxicated; there was no question about it. More to relieve his own deep chagrin than for any logical reason Mr. Leary shook him again; the net results were a protesting semiconscious gargle and a further careening slant of the sleeper's form.

Well, there was nothing else to do but walk. He must make his way afoot until he came to Sixth Avenue or on to Fifth, upon the chance of finding in one of these two thoroughfares a ranging nighthawk cab. As a last resort he

could take the Subway or the L north. This contingency, though, Mr. Leary considered with feelings akin to actual repugnance. He dreaded the prospect of ribald and derisive comments from chance fellow travellers upon a public transportation line. For you should know that though Mr. Leary's outer garbing was in the main conventional there were strikingly incongruous features of it too.

From his neck to his knees he correctly presented the aspect of a gentleman returning late from social diversions, caparisoned in a handsome fur-faced, fur-lined top coat. But his knees were entirely bare; so, too, were his legs down to about midway of the calves, where there ensued, as it were, a pair of white silk socks, encircled by pink garters with large and ornate pink ribbon bows upon them. His feet were bestowed in low slippers with narrow buttoned straps crossing the insteps. It was Miss Skiff, with her instinct for the verities, who had insisted upon bows for the garters and straps for the slippers, these being what she had called finishing touches. Likewise it was due to that young lady's painstaking desire for appropriateness and completeness of detail that Mr. Leary at this moment wore upon his head a very wide-brimmed, very floppy straw hat with two quaint pink-ribbon streamers floating jauntily down between his shoulders at the back.

For reasons which in view of this sartorial description should be obvious, Mr. Leary

hugged closely up to the abutting house fronts when he left behind him the marooned taxi with its comatose driver asleep upon it, like one lone castaway upon a small island in a sea of emptiness, and set his face eastward. Such was the warmth of his annoyance he barely felt the chill striking upon his exposed nether limbs or took note of the big snowflakes melting damply upon his thinly protected ankles. Then, too, almost immediately something befell which upset him still more.

He came to where a wooden marquee, projecting over the entrance to a shipping room, made a black strip along the feebly lighted pavement. As he entered the patch of darkness the shape of a man materialized out of the void and barred his way, and in that same fraction of a second something shiny and hard was thrust against Mr. Leary's daunted bosom, and in a low forceful rumble a voice commanded him as follows: "Put up yore mitts—and keep 'em up!"

Matching the action of his hands everything in Mr. Leary seemed to start skyward simultaneously. His hair on his scalp straightened, his breath came up from his lungs in a gasp, his heart lodged in his throat, and his blood quit his feet, leaving them practically devoid of circulation and ascended and drummed in his temples. He had a horrid, emptied feeling in his diaphragm, too, as though the organs customarily resident there had caught the contagion of the example and gone north.

"That's nice," spake the fearsome stranger. "Now stay jest the way you are and don't make no peep or I'll have to plug you wit' this here gat."

His right hand maintained the sinister pressure of the weapon against the victim's deflated chest, while his left dexterously explored the side pockets of Mr. Leary's overcoat. Then the same left hand jerked the frogged fastenings of the garment asunder and went pawing swiftly over Mr. Leary's quivering person, seeking the pockets which would have been there had Mr. Leary been wearing garments bearing the regulation and ordained number of pockets. But the exploring fingers merely slid along a smooth and unbroken frontal surface.

"Wot t'ell? Wot t'ell?" muttered the footpad in bewilderment. "Say, where're you got yore leather and yore kittle hid? Speak up quick!"

"I'm—I'm—not carrying a watch or a purse tonight," quavered Mr. Leary. "These—these clothes I happen to be wearing are not made with places in them for a watch or anything. And you've already taken what money I had—it was all in my overcoat pocket."

"Yep; a pinch of chicken feed and wot felt like about four one-bone bills." The highwayman's accent was both ominous and contemptuous. "Say, wotcher mean drillin' round dis town in some kinder funny riggin' wit'out no plunder on you? I gotta right to belt you one acrost the bean."

"I'd rather you didn't do that," protested Mr. Leary in all seriousness. "If—if you'd only give me your address I could send you some money in the morning to pay you for your trouble——"

"Cut out de kiddin'," broke in the disgusted marauder. His tone changed slightly for the better. "Say, near as I kin tell by feelin' it, dat ain't such a bum benny you're sportin'. I'll jest take dat along wit' me. Letcher arms down easy and hold 'em straight out from yore sides while I gits it offen you. And no funny business!"

"Oh, please, please, don't take my overcoat," implored Mr. Leary, plunged by these words into a deeper panic. "Anything but that. I—you—you really mustn't leave me without my overcoat."

"Wot else is dere to take?"

Even as he uttered the scornful question the thief had wrested the garment from Mr. Leary's helpless form and was backing away into the darkness.

Out of impenetrable gloom came his farewell warning: "Stay right where you are for fi' minutes wit'out movin' or makin' a yelp. If you wiggle before de time is up I gotta pal right yere watchin' you, and he'll sure plug you. He ain't no easy-goin' guy like wot I am. You're gittin' off lucky it's me stuck you up, stidder him."

With these words he was gone—gone with

Mr. Leary's overcoat, with Mr. Leary's last cent, with his latchkey, with his cardcase, with all by which Mr. Leary might hope to identify himself before a wary and incredulous world for what he was. He was gone, leaving there in the protecting ledge of shadow the straw-hatted, socked-and-slippered, leg-gartered figure of a plump being, clad otherwise in a single vestment which began at the line of a becomingly low neckband and terminated in blousy outbulging bifurcations just above the naked knees. Light stealing into this obscured and sheltered spot would have revealed that this garment was, as to texture, a heavy, silklike, sheeny, material; and as to color a vivid and compelling pink—the exact color of a slice of well-ripened watermelon; also that its sleeves ended elbow-high in an effect of broad turned-back cuffs; finally, that adown its owner's back it was snugly and adequately secured by means of a close-set succession of very large, very shiny white pearl buttons; the whole constituting an enlarged but exceedingly accurate copy of what, descriptively, is known to the manufactured-garment trade as a one-piece suit of child's rompers, self-trimmed, fastening behind; suitable for nursery, playground and seashore, especially recommended as summer wear for the little ones; to be had in all sizes; prices such-and-such.

Within a space of some six or seven minutes this precisely was what the nearest street lamp

did reveal unto itself as its downward-slanting beams fell upon a furtive, fugitive shape, suggestive in that deficient subradiance of a vastly overgrown forked parsnip, miraculously endowed with powers of locomotion and bound for somewhere in a hurry; excepting of course no forked parsnip, however remarkable in other respects, would be wearing a floppy straw hat in a snowstorm; nor is it likely it would be adorned lengthwise in its rear with a highly decorative design of broad, smooth, polished disks which, even in that poor illumination, gleamed and twinkled and wiggled snakily and out of alignment, in accord with the movements of their wearer's spinal column.

But the reader and I, better informed than any lamp post could be as to the prior sequence of events, would know at a glance it was no parsnip we beheld, but Mr. Algernon Leary, now suddenly enveloped, through no fault of his own, in one of the most overpowering predicaments conceivable to involve a rising lawyer and a member of at least two good clubs; and had we but been there to watch him, knowing, as we would know, the developments leading up to this present situation, we might have guessed what was the truth: That Mr. Leary was hot bent upon retreating to the only imaginable refuge left to him at this juncture—to wit, the interior of the stranded taxicab which he had abandoned but a short time previously.

IV

Nearly all of us at some time or other in our lives have dreamed awful dreams of being discovered in a public place with nothing at all upon our bodies, and have awakened, burning hot with the shame of an enormous and terrific embarrassment. Being no student of the psychic phenomena of human slumber I do not know whether this is a subconscious harking-back to the days of our infancy or whether it is merely a manifestation to prove the inadvisability of partaking of Welsh rabbits and lobster salads immediately before retiring. More than once Mr. Leary had bedreamed thus, but at this moment he realized how much more dread and distressing may be a dire actuality than a vision conjured up out of the mysteries of sleep.

One surprised by strangers in a nude or partially nude state may have any one of a dozen acceptable excuses for being so circumstanced. An earthquake may have caught one unawares, say; or inopportunely a bathroom door may have blown open. Once the first shock occasioned by the untoward appearance of the victim has passed away he is sure of sympathy. For him pity is promptly engendered and volunteer aid is enlisted.

But Mr. Leary had a profound conviction that, revealed in this ghastly plight before the eyes of his fellows, his case would be regarded

differently; that instead of commiseration there would be for him only the derision which is so humiliating to a sensitive nature. He felt so undignified, so glaringly conspicuous, so—well, so scandalously immature. If only it had been an orthodox costume party which Mrs. Carroway had given, why, then he might have gone as a Roman senator or as a private chief or an Indian brave or a cavalier. In doublet or jack boots or war bonnet, in a toga, even, he might have mastered the dilemma and carried off a dubious situation. But to be adrift in an alien quarter of a great and heartless city round four o'clock in the morning, so picturesquely and so unseasonably garbed, and in imminent peril of detection, was a prospect calculated to fill one with the frenzied delirium of a nightmare made real. Put yourself in his place, I ask you.

His slippered feet spurned the thin snow as he moved rapidly back toward the west. Ahead of him he could detect the clumped outlines of the taxicab, and at the sight of it he quickened to a trot. Once safely within it he could take stock of things; could map out a campaign of future action; could think up ways and means of extricating himself from his present lamentable case with the least possible risk of undesirable publicity. At any rate he would be shielded for the moment from the life which might at any moment awaken in the still sleeping and apparently vacant neighborhood. Finally, of course, there was the hope that the drunken

cabman might be roused, and once roused might be capable, under promise of rich financial reward, of conveying Mr. Leary to his bachelor apartments in West Eighty-fifth Street before dawn came, with its early-bird milkmen and its before-day newspaper distributors and its others too numerous to mention.

Without warning of any sort the cab started off, seemingly of its own volition. Mr. Leary's gait became a desperate gallop, and as he galloped he gave voice in entreaty.

"Hey there!" he shouted. "Wait, please. Here I am—here's your passenger!"

His straw hat blew off, but this was no time to stop for a straw hat. For a few rods he gained upon the vehicle, then as its motion increased he lost ground and ran a losing race. Its actions disclosed that a conscious if an uncertain hand guided its destinies. Wabbling this way and that it wheeled skiddingly round a corner. When Mr. Leary, rowelled on to yet greater speed by the spurs of a mounting misery, likewise turned the corner it was irrevocably remote, beyond all prospect of being overtaken by anything human pursuing it afoot. The swaying black bulk of it diminished and was swallowed up in the snow shower and the darkness. The rattle of mishandled gears died to a thin metallic clanking, then to a purring whisper, and then the whisper expired, dead silence ensuing.

V

In the void of this silence stood Mr. Leary, shivering now in the reaction that had succeeded the nerve jar of being robbed at a pistol's point, and lacking the fervor of the chase to sustain him. For him the inconceivable disaster was complete and utter; upon him despair descended as a patent swatter upon a lone housefly. Miles away from home, penniless and friendless—the two terms being practically synonymous in New York—what asylum was there for him now? Suppose daylight found him abroad thus? Suppose he succumbed to exposure and was discovered stiffly frozen in a doorway? Death by processes of congealment must carry an added sting if one had to die in a suit of pink rompers buttoning down the back. As though the thought of freezing had been a cue to Nature he noted a tickling in his nose and a chokiness in his throat, and somewhere in his system, a long way off, so to speak, he felt a sneeze forming and approaching the surface.

To add to his state of misery, if anything could add to its distressing total, he was taking cold. When Mr. Leary took cold he took it thoroughly and throughout his system. Very soon, as he knew by past experience, his voice would be hoarse and wheezy and his nose and his eyes would run. But the sneeze was delayed in transit, and Mr. Leary tood advantage of the respite to cast a glance about him. Per-

haps—the expedient had surged suddenly into his brain—perhaps there might be a hotel or a lodging house of sorts hereabouts? If so, such an establishment would have a night clerk on duty, and despite the baggageless and cashless state of the suppliant it was possible the night clerk might be won, by compassion or by argument or by both, to furnish Mr. Leary shelter until after breakfast time, when over the telephone he could reach friends and from these friends procure an outfit of funds and suitable clothing.

In sight, though, there was no structure which by its outward appearance disclosed itself as a place of entertainment for the casual wayfarer. Howsomever, lights were shining through the frosted panes of a row of windows stretching across the top floor of a building immediately at hand, and even as he made this discovery Mr. Leary was aware of the dimmed sounds of revelry and of orchestral music up there, and also of an illuminated canvas triangle stuck above the hallway entrance of the particular building in question, this device bearing a lettered inscription upon it to advertise that here the members of the Lawrence P. McGillicuddy Literary Association and Pleasure Club were holding their Grand Annual Civic Ball; admission One Dollar, including Hat Check; Ladies Free when accompanied by Gents. Evidently the Lawrence P. McGillicuddys kept even later hours at

their roisterings than the Bohemian sets in Washington Square kept.

Observing these evidences of adjacent life and merry-makings Mr. Leary cogitated. Did he dare intrude upon the festivities aloft there? And if he did so dare should he enter cavortingly, trippingly, with intent to deceive the assembled company into the assumption that he had come to their gathering in costume; or should he throw himself upon their charity and making open confession of his predicament seek to enlist the friendly offices of some kindly soul in extricating him from it?

While he canvassed the two propositions tentatively he heard the thud of footsteps descending the stairs from the dance hall, and governed by an uncontrollable impulse he leaped for concealment behind a pile of building material that was stacked handily upon the sidewalk almost at his elbow. He might possibly have driven himself to face a multitude indoors, but somehow could not, just naturally could not, in his present apparel, face one stranger outdoors—or at least not until he had opportunity to appraise the stranger.

It was a man who emerged from the hallway entrance; a stockily built man wearing his hat well over one ear and with his ulster opened and flung back exposing a broad chest to the wintry air. He was whistling a sprightly air.

Just as this individual came opposite the lumber pile the first dedicatory sneeze of a

whole subsequent series of sneezes which had been burgeoning somewhere in the top of Mr. Leary's head, and which that unhappy gentleman had been mechanically endeavoring to suppress, burst from captivity with a vast moist report. At the explosion the passer-by spun about and his whistle expired in a snort of angered surprise as the bared head of Mr. Leary appeared above the topmost board of the pile, and Mr. Leary's abashed face looked into his.

"Say," he demanded, "wotcher meanin', hidin' there and snortin' in a guy's ear?"

His manner was truculent; indeed, verged almost upon the menacing. Evidently the shock had adversely affected his temper, to the point where he might make personal issues out of unavoidable trifles. Instinctively Mr. Leary felt that the situation which had arisen called for diplomacy of the very highest order. He cleared his throat before replying.

"Good evening," he began, in what he vainly undertook to make a casual tone of voice. "I beg your pardon—the sneeze—ahem—occurred when I wasn't expecting it. Ahem—I wonder if you would do me a favor?"

"I would not! Come snortin' in a guy's ear that-a-way and then askin' him would he do you a favor. You got a crust for fair!" Here, though, a natural curiosity triumphed over the rising tides of indignation. "Wot favor do you want, anyway?" he inquired shortly.

"Would you—would you—I wonder if you would be willing to sell me that overcoat you're wearing?"

"I would not!"

"You see, the fact of the matter is I happened to be needing an overcoat very badly at the moment," pressed Mr. Leary. "I was hoping that you might be induced to name a price for yours."

"I would not! M. J. Cassidy wears M. J. Cassidy's clothes, and nobody else wears 'em, believe me! Wot's happened to your own coat?"

"I lost it—I mean it was stolen."

"Stole?"

"Yes, a robber with a revolver held me up a few minutes ago just over here in the next cross street and he took my coat away."

"Huh! Well, did you lose your hat the same way?"

"Yes—that is to say, no. I lost my hat running."

"Oh, you run, hey? Well, you look to me like a guy wot would run. Well, did he take your clothes, too? Is that why you're squattin' behind them timbers?" The inquisitive one took a step nearer.

"No—oh, no! I'm still wearing my—my—the costume I was wearing," answered Mr. Leary, apprehensively wedging his way still farther back between the stack of boards and the wall behind. "But you see——"

"Well then, barrin' the fact that you ain't

got no hat, ain't you jest as well off without no overcoat now as I'd be if I fell for any hard-luck spiel from you and let you have mine?"

"I wouldn't go so far as to say that exactly," tendered Mr. Leary ingratiatingly. "I'm afraid my clothing isn't as suitable for outdoor wear as yours is. You see, I'd been to a sort of social function and on my way home it—it happened."

"Oh, it did, did it? Well, anyway, I should worry about you and your clothes," stated the other. He took a step onward, then halted; and now the gleam of speculative gain was in his eye. "Say, if I was willin' to sell—not sayin' I would be, but if I was—wot would you be willin' to give for an overcoat like this here one?"

"Any price within reason—any price you felt like asking," said Mr. Leary, his hopes of deliverance rekindling.

"Well, maybe I'd take twenty-five dollars for it just as it stands and no questions ast. How'd that strike you?"

"I'll take it. That seems a most reasonable figure."

"Well, fork over the twenty-five then, and the deal's closed."

"I'd have to send you the money to-morrow —I mean to-day. You see, the thief took all my cash when he took my overcoat."

"Did, huh?"

"Yes, that's the present condition of things. Very annoying, isn't it? But I'll take your

address. I'm a lawyer in business in Broad Street, and as soon as I reach my office I'll send the amount by messenger."

"Aw, to hell with you and your troubles! I might a-knowed you was some new kind of a panhandler when you come a-snortin' in my ear that-a-way. Better beat it while the goin's good. You're in the wrong neighborhood to be springin' such a gag as this one you jest now sprang on me. Anyhow, I've wasted enough time on the likes of you."

He was ten feet away when Mr. Leary, his wits sharpened by his extremity, clutched at the last straw.

"One moment," he nervously begged. "Did I understand you to say your name was Cassidy?"

"You did. Wot of it?"

"Well, curious coincidence and all that—but my name happens to be Leary. And I thought that because of that you might——"

The stranger broke in on him. "Your name happens to be Leary, does it? Wot's your other name then?"

"Algernon."

Stepping lightly on the balls of his feet Mr. Cassidy turned back, and his mien for some reason was potentially that of a belligerent.

"Say," he declared threateningly, "you know wot I think about you? Well, I think you're a liar. No regular guy with the name of Leary would let a cheap stiff of a stick-up rob him out

of the coat offen his back without puttin' up a battle. No regular guy named Leary would be named Algernon. Say, I think you're a Far Downer. I wouldn't be surprised but wot you was an A. P. A. on the top of that. And wot's all this here talk about goin' to a sociable functure and comin' away not suitably dressed? Come on out of that now and let's have a look at you."

"Really, I'd much rather not—if you don't mind," protested the miserable Mr. Leary. "I—I have reasons."

"The same here. Will you come out from behind there peaceable or will I fetch you out?"

So Mr. Leary came, endeavoring while coming to wear a manner combining an atmosphere of dignified aloofness and a sentiment of frank indifference to the opinion of this loutish busybody, with just a touch, a mere trace, as it were, of nonchalance thrown in. In short, coming out he sought to deport himself as though it were the properest thing in the world for a man of years and discretion to be wearing a bright pink one-piece article of apparel on a public highway at four A.M. or thereabouts. Undoubtedly, considering everything, it was the hardest individual task essayed in New York during the first year of the war. Need I add that it was a failure—a total failure? As he stood forth fully and comprehensively revealed by the light of the adjacent trans-

parency, Mr. Cassidy's squint of suspicion widened into a pop-eyed stare of temporary stupefaction.

"Well, for the love of—— In the name of ——Did anywan ever see the likes of——!"

He murmured the broken sentences as he circled about the form of the martyr. Completing the circuit, laughter of a particularly boisterous and concussive variety interrupted his fragmentary speech.

"Ha ha, ha ha," echoed Mr. Leary in a palpably forced and hollow effort, to show that he, too, could enter into the spirit of the occasion with heartiness. "Does strike one as rather unusual at first sight—doesn't it?"

"Why, you big hooman radish! Why, you strollin' sunset!" thus Mr. Cassidy responded. "Are you payin' an election bet three weeks after the election's over? Or is it that you're just a plain bedaddled ijiet? Or wot is it, I wonder?"

"I explained to you that I went to a party. It was a fancy-dress party," stated Mr. Leary.

Sharp on the words Mr. Cassidy's manner changed. Here plainly was a person of moods, changeable and tempersome.

"Ain't you ashamed of yourself, and you a large grown man, to be skihootin' round with them kind of foolish duds on, and your own country at war this minute for decency and democracy?" From this it also was evident that Mr. Cassidy read the editorials in the

papers. "You should take shame to yourself that you ain't in uniform instid of baby clothes."

It was the part of discretion, so Mr. Leary inwardly decided, to ignore the fact that the interrogator himself appeared to be well within the military age.

"I'm a bit old to enlist," he stated, "and I'm past the draft age."

"Then you're too old to be wearin' such riggin'. But, by cripes, I'll say this for you—you make a picture that'd make a horse laugh."

Laughing like a horse, or as a horse would laugh if a horse ever laughed, he rocked to and fro on his heels.

"Sh-sh; not so loud, please," importuned Mr. Leary, casting an uneasy glance toward the lighted windows above. "Somebody might hear you!"

"I hope somebody does hear me," gurgled the temperamental Mr. Cassidy, now once more thoroughly beset by his mirth. "I need somebody to help me laugh. By cripes, I need a whole crowd to help me; and I know a way to get them!"

He twisted his head round so his voice would ascend the hallway. "Hey, fellers and skoirts," he called; "you that's fixin' to leave! Hurry on down here quick and see Algy, the livin' peppermint lossenger, before he melts away with his own sweetness."

Obeying the summons with promptness a flight of the Lawrence P. McGillicuddys,

accompanied for the most part by lady friends, cascaded down the stairs and erupted forth upon the sidewalk.

"Here y'are—right here!" clarioned Mr. Cassidy as the first skylarkish pair showed in the doorway. His manner was drolly that of a showman exhibiting a rare freak, newly captured. "Come a-runnin'!"

They came a-running and there were a dozen of them or possible fifteen; blithesome spirits, all, and they fenced in the shrinking shape of Mr. Leary with a close and curious ring of themselves, and the combined volume of their glad, amazed outbursts might be heard for a distance of furlongs. On prankish impulse then they locked hands and with skippings and prancings and impromptu jig steps they circled about him; and he, had he sought to speak, could not well have been heard; and, anyway, he was for the moment past speech, because of being entirely engaged in giving vent to one vehement sneeze after another. And next, above the chorus of joyous whooping might be heard individual comments, each shrieked out shrilly and each punctuated by a sneeze from Mr. Leary's convulsed frame; or lacking that by a simulated sneeze from one of the revellers —one with a fine humorous flare for mimicry. And these comments were, for example, such as:

"Git onto the socks!"

"Ker-chew!"

"And the slippers!"

"Ker-chew!"

"And them lovely pink garters!"

"Ker-chew!"

"Oh, you cutey! Oh, you cut-up!"

"Ker-chew!"

"Oh, you candy kid!"

"And say, git onto the cunnin' elbow sleeves our little playmate's sportin'."

"Yes, but goils, just pipe the poilies—ain't they the greatest ever?"

"They sure are. Say, kiddo, gimme a button to remember you by, won't you? You'll never miss it—you got a-plenty more."

"Wot d'ye call wot he's got on 'um, anyway?" The speaker was a male, naturally.

"W'y, you big stoopid, can't you see he's wearin' rompers?" The answer came in a giggle, from a gay youthful creature of the opposite sex as she kicked out roguishly.

"Well, then be chee, w'y don't he romp a little?"

"Give 'um time, cancher? Don't you see he's blowin' out his flues? He's busy now. He'll romp in a minute."

"Sure he will! We'll romp with 'um."

A waggish young person in white beaded slippers and a green sport skirt broke free from the cavorting ring, and behind Mr. Leary's back the nimble fingers of the madcap tapped his spinal ornamentations as an instrumentalist taps the stops of an organ; and she chanted a familiar counting game of childhood:

"Rich man—poor man—beggar man—thief —doctor—loiryer——"

"Sure, he said he was a loiryer." It was Mr. Cassidy breaking in. "And he said his name was Algernon. Well, I believe the Algernon part—the big A. P. A."

"Oh, you Algy!"

"Algernon, does your mother know you're out?"

"T'ree cheers for Algy, the walkin' comic valentine!"

"Algy, Algy—Oh, you cutey Algy!" These jolly Greenwich Villagers were going to make a song of his name. They did make a song of it, and it was a frolicsome song and pitched to a rollicksome key. Congenial newcomers arrived, pelting down from upstairs whence they had been drawn by the happy rocketing clamor; and they caught spirit and step and tune with the rest and helped manfully to sing it. As one poet hath said, "And now reigned high carnival." And as another has so aptly phrased it, "There was sound of revelry by night." And, as the second poet once put it, or might have put it so if so be he didn't, "And all went merry as a marriage bell." But when we, adapting the line to our own descriptive usages, now say all went merry we should save out one exception—one whose form alternately was racked by hot flushes of a terrific self-consciousness and by humid gusts of an equally terrific sneezing fit.

VI

"Here, here, here! Cut out the yellin'! D'you want the whole block up out of their beds?" The voice of the personified law, gruff and authoritative, broke in upon the clamor, and the majesty of the law, typified in bulk, with galoshes, ear muffs and woollen gloves on, not to mention the customary uniform of blue and brass, ploughed a path toward the centre of the group.

" 'S all right, Switzer," gaily replied a hoydenish lassie; she, the same who had begged Mr. Leary for a sea-pearl souvenir. "But just see wot Morrie Cassidy went and found here on the street!"

Patrolman Switzer looked then where she pointed, and could scarce believe his eyes. In his case gleefulness took on a rumbling thunderous form, which shook his being as with an ague and made him to beat himself violently upon his ribs.

"D'ye blame us for carryin' on, Switzer, when we seen it ourselves?"

"I don't—and that's a fact," Switzer confessed between gurgles. "I wouldn't a blamed you much if you'd fell down and had a fit." And then he rocked on his heels, filled with joviality clear down to his rubber soles. Anon, though, he remembered the responsibilities of his position. "Still, at that, and even so," said he, sobering himself, "enough of a good

thing's enough." He glared accusingly, yes, condemningly, at the unwitting cause of the quelled commotion.

"Say, what's the idea, you carousin' round Noo York City this hour of the night diked up like a Coney Island Maudie Graw? And what's the idea, you causin' a boisterous and disorderly crowd to collect? And what's the idea, you makin' a disturbance in a vicinity full of decent hard-workin' people that's tryin' to get a little rest? What's the general idea, anyhow?"

At this moment Mr. Leary, having sneezed an uncountable number of times, regained the powers of coherent utterance.

"It is not my fault," he said. "I assure you of that, officer. I am being misjudged; I am the victim of circumstances over which I have no control. You see, officer, I went last evening to a fancy-dress party and——"

"Well, then, why didn't you go on home afterwards and behave yourself?"

"I did—I started, in a taxicab. But the taxicab driver was drunk and he went to sleep on the way and the taxicab stopped and I got out of it and started to walk across town looking for another taxicab and——"

"Started walkin', dressed like that?"

"Certainly not. I had an overcoat on, of course. But a highwayman held me up at the point of a revolver, and he took my overcoat and what money I had and my card case and——"

"Where did all this here happen—this here alleged robbery?"

"Not two blocks away from here, right over in the next street to this one."

"I don't believe nothin' of the kind!"

Patrolman Switzer spoke with enhanced severity; his professional honor had been touched in a delicate place. The bare suggestion that a footpad might dare operate in a district under his immediate personal supervision would have been to him deeply repugnant, and here was this weirdly attired wanderer making the charge direct.

"But, officer, I insist—I protest that——"

"Young feller, I think you've been drinkin', that's what I think about you. Your voice sounds to me like you've been drinkin' about a gallon of mixed ale. I think you dreamed all this here pipe about a robber and a pistol and an overcoat and a taxicab and all. Now you take a friendly tip from me and you run along home as fast as ever you can, and you get them delirious clothes off of you and then you get in bed and take a good night's sleep and you'll feel better. Because if you don't it's goin' to be necessary for me to run you in for a public nuisance. I ain't askin' you—I'm tellin' you, now. If you don't want to be locked up, start movin'—that's my last word to you."

The recent merrymakers, who had fallen silent the better to hear the dialogue, grouped themselves expectantly, hoping and waiting for

a yet more exciting and humorous sequel to what had gone before—if such a miracle might be possible. Nor were they to be disappointed. The dénouement came quickly upon the heels of the admonition.

For into Mr. Leary's reeling and distracted mind the warning had sent a clarifying idea darting. Why hadn't he thought of a police station before now? Perforce the person in charge at any police station would be under requirement to shelter him. What even if he were locked up temporarily? In a cell he would be safe from the slings and arrows of outrageous ridicule; and surely among the functionaries in any station house would be one who would know a gentleman in distress, however startlingly the gentleman might be garbed. Surely, too, somebody—once that somebody's amazement had abated—would be willing to do some telephoning for him. Perhaps, even, a policeman off duty might be induced to take his word for it that he was what really he was, and not what he seemed to be, and loan him a change of clothing.

Hot upon the inspiration Mr. Leary decided on his course of action. He would get himself safely and expeditiously removed from the hateful company and the ribald comments of the Lawrence P. McGillicuddys and their friends. He would get himself locked up—that was it. He would now take the first steps in that direction.

"Are you goin' to start on home purty soon like I've just been tellin' you; or are you ain't?" snapped Patrolman Switzer, who, it would appear, was by no means a patient person.

"I am not!" The crafty Mr. Leary put volumes of husky defiance into his answer. "I'm not going home—and you can't make me go home, either." He rejoiced inwardly to see how the portly shape of Switzer stiffened and swelled at the taunt. "I'm a citizen and I have a right to go where I please, dressed as I please, and you don't dare to stop me. I defy you to arrest me!" Suddenly he put both his hands in Patrolman Switzer's fleshy midriff and gave him a violent shove. An outraged grunt went up from Switzer, a delighted whoop from the audience. Swept off his balance by the prospect of fruition for his design the plotter had technically been guilty before witnesses of a violent assault upon the person of an officer in the sworn discharge of his duty.

He felt himself slung violently about. One mitted hand fixed itself in Mr. Leary's collar yoke at the rear; the other closed upon a handful of slack material in the lower breadth of Mr. Leary's principal habiliment just below where his buttons left off.

"So you won't come, won't you? Well, then, I'll show you—you pink strawberry drop!"

Enraged at having been flaunted before a jeering audience the patrolman pushed his prisoner ten feet along the sidewalk, imparting

to the offender's movements an involuntary gliding gait, with backward jerks between forward shoves; this method of propulsion being known in the vernacular of the force as "givin' a skate the bum's rush."

"Hey, Switzer, lend me your key and I'll ring for the wagon for you," volunteered Mr. Cassidy. His care-free companions, some of them, cheered the suggestion, seeing in it prospect of a prolonging of this delectable sport which providence without charge had so graciously deigned to provide.

"Never mind about the wagon. Us two'll walk, me and him," announced the patrolman. "'Taint so far where we're goin', and the walk'll do this fresh guy a little good— maybe'll sober him up. And never mind about any of the rest of you taggin' along behind us neither. This is a pinch—not a free street parade. Go on home now, the lot of youse, before you wake up the whole Lower West Side."

Loath to be cheated out of the last act of a comedy so unique and so rich the whimsical McGillicuddys and their chosen mates fell reluctantly away, with yells and gibes and quips and farewell bursts of laughter.

VII

Closely hyphenated together the deep blue figure and the bright pink one rounded the corner and were alone. It was time to open the overtures which would establish Patrolman

Switzer upon the basis of a better understanding of things. Mr. Leary, craning his neck in order to look rearward into the face of his custodian, spoke in a key very different from the one he had last employed.

"I really didn't intend, you know, to resist you, officer. I had a private purpose in what I did. And you were quite within your rights. And I'm very grateful to you—really I am for driving those people away."

"Is that so?" The inflection was grimly and heavily sarcastic.

"Yes. I am a lawyer by profession, and generally speaking I know what your duties are. I merely made a show—a pretence, as it were—of resisting you, in order to get away from that mob. It was—ahem—it was a device on my part—in short, a trick."

"Is that so? Fixin' to try to beg off now, huh? Well, nothin' doin'! Nothin' doin'! I don't know whether you're a fancy nut or a plain souse or what-all, but whatever you are you're under arrest and you're goin' with me."

"That's exactly what I desire to do," resumed the schemer. "I desire most earnestly to go with you."

"You're havin' your wish, ain't you? Well, then, the both of us should oughter be satisfied."

"I feel sure," continued the wheedling and designing Mr. Leary, "that as soon as we reach the station house I can make satisfactory atonement to you for my behavior just now and

can explain everything to your superiors in charge there, and then——"

"Station house!" snorted Patrolman Switzer. "Why, say, you ain't headin' for no station house. The crowd that's over there where you're headin' for should be grateful to me for bringin' you in. You'll be a treat to them, and it's few enough pleasures some of them gets——"

A new, a horrid doubt assailed Mr. Leary's sorely taxed being. He began to have a dread premonition that all was not going well and his brain whirled anew.

"But I prefer to be taken to the station house," he began.

"And who are you to be preferrin' anything at all?" countered Switzer. "I'll phone back to the station where I am and what I've done; though that part of it's no business of yours. I'll be doin' that after I've arraigned you over to Jefferson Market."

"Jeff—Jefferson Market!"

"Sure, 'tis to Jefferson Market night court you're headin' this minute. Where else? They're settin' late over there to-night; the magistrate is expectin' some raids somewheres about daylight, I dope it. Anyhow, they're open yet; I know that. So it'll be me and you for Jefferson Market inside of five minutes; and I'm thinkin' you'll get quite a reception."

Jefferson Market! Mr. Leary could picture the rows upon rows of gloating eyes. He heard the incredulous shout that would mark his

entrance, the swell of unholy glee from the benches that would interrupt the proceedings. He saw stretched upon the front pages of the early editions of the afternoon yellows the glaring black-faced headlines:

WELL-KNOWN LAWYER
CLAD IN PINK ROMPERS
HALED TO NIGHT COURT

He saw—but Switzer's next remark sent a fresh shudder of apprehension through him, caught all again, as he was, in the coils of accursed circumstance.

"Magistrate Voris will be gettin' sleepy what with waitin' for them raids to be pulled off, and I make no doubt the sight of you will put him in a good humor."

And Magistrate Voris was his rival for the favors of Miss Milly Hollister! And Magistrate Voris was a person with a deformed sense of humor! And Magistrate Voris was sitting in judgment this moment at Jefferson Market night court. And now desperation, thrice compounded, rent the soul of the trapped victim of his own misaimed subterfuge.

"I won't be taken to any night court!" he shouted, wresting himself toward the edge of the sidewalk and dragging his companion along with him. "I won't go there! I demand to be taken to a station house. I'm a sick man and I require the services of a doctor."

"Startin' to be rough-house all over again, huh?" grunted Switzer vindictively. "Well, we'll see about that part of it, too—right now!"

Surrendering his lowermost clutch, the one in the silken seat of the suit of his writhing prisoner, he fumbled beneath the tails of his overcoat for the disciplinary nippers that were in his right-hand rear trousers pocket.

With a convulsive twist of his body Mr. Leary jerked himself free of the mittened grip upon his neckband, and as, released, he gave a deerlike lunge forward for liberty he caromed against a burdened ash can upon the curbstone and sent it spinning backward; then recovering sprang onward and outward across the gutter in flight. In the same instant he heard behind him a crash of metal and a solid thud, heard a sound as of a scrambling solid body cast abruptly prone, heard the name of Deity profaned, and divined without looking back that the ash can, conveniently rolling between the plump legs of the personified Arm of the Law, had been Officer Switzer's undoing, and might be his salvation.

VIII

With never a backward glance he ran on, not doubling as a hare before the beagle, but following a straight course, like unto a hunted roebuck. He did not know he could run so fast, and he could not have run so fast any

other time than this. Beyond was a crossing. It was blind instinct that made him double round the turn. And it was instinct, quickened and guided by desperation, that made him dart like a rose-tinted flash up the steps to the stoop of an old-fashioned residence standing just beyond the corner, spring inside the storm doors, draw them to behind him, and crouch there, hidden, as pursuit went lumbering by.

Through a chink between the door halves he watched breathlessly while Switzer, who moved with a pronounced limp and rubbed his knees as he limped, hobbled halfway up the block, slowed down, halted, glared about him for sight or sign of the vanished fugitive, and then misled by a false trail departed, padding heavily with a galoshed tread, round the next turn.

With his body still drawn well back within the shadow line of the overhanging cornice Mr. Leary coyly protruded his head and took visual inventory of the neighborhood. So far as any plan whatsoever had formed in the mind of our diffident adventurer he meant to bide where he was for the moment. Here, where he had shelter of a sort, he would recapture his breath and reassemble his wits. Even so, the respite from those elements which Mr. Leary dreaded most of all—publicity, observation, cruel gibes, the harsh raucous laughter of the populace—could be at best but a woefully transient one. He was not resigned—by no means was he resigned—to his fate; but he

was helpless. For what ailed him there was no conceivable remedy.

Anon jocund day would stand tiptoe on something or other; Greenwich Village would awaken and bestir itself. Discovery would come, and forth he would be drawn like a shy, unwilling periwinkle from its shell, once more to play his abased and bashful rôle of free entertainer to guffawing mixed audiences. For all others in the great city there were havens and homes. But for a poor, lorn, unguided vagrant, enmeshed in the burlesque garnitures of a three-year-old male child, what haven was there? By night the part had been hard enough —as the unresponsive heavens above might have testified. By the stark unmerciful sunlight; by the rude, revealing glow of the impending day how much more scandalous would it be!

His haggard gaze swept this way and that, seeking possible succor where reason told him there could be no succor; and then as his vision pieced together this outjutting architectural feature and that into a coherent picture of his immediate surroundings he knew where he was. The one bit of chancy luck in a sequence of direful catastrophes had brought him here to this very spot. Why, this must be West Ninth Street; it had to be, it was—oh joy, it was! And Bob Slack, his partner, lived in this identical block on this same side of the street.

With his throat throbbing to the impulse of newborn hope he emerged completely from

behind the refuge of the storm doors, backed himself out and down upon the top step, and by means of a dubious illumination percolating through the fanlight above the inner door he made out the figures upon the lintel. This was such and such a number; therefore Bob Slack's number must be the second number to the eastward, at the next door but one.

IX

Five seconds later a fleet apparition of a prevalent pinkish tone gave a ranging house cat the fright of its life as former darted past latter to vault nimbly up the stone steps of a certain weatherbeaten four-story-and-basement domicile. Set in the door jamb here was a vertical row of mail-slots, and likewise a vertical row of electric push buttons; these objects attesting to the fact that this house, once upon a time the home of a single family, had eventually undergone the transformation which in lower New York befalls so many of its kind, and had become a layer-like succession of light-housekeeping apartments, one apartment to a floor, and the caretaker in the basement.

Since Bob Slack's bachelor quarters were on the topmost floor Bob Slack's push button would be the next to the lowermost of the battery of buttons. A chilled tremulous finger found that particular button and pressed it long and hard, released it, pressed it again and yet again. And in the interval following each period of pressing

the finger's owner hearkened, all ears, for the answering click-click that would tell him the sleeper having been roused by the ringing had risen and pressed the master button that released the mechanism of the street door's lock.

But no welcome clicking rewarded the expectant ringer. Assuredly Bob Slack must be the soundest sleeper in the known world. He who waited rang and rang and rerang. There was no response.

Eventually conviction was forced upon Mr. Leary that he must awaken the caretaker—who, he seemed dimly to recall as a remembrance of past visits to Bob Slack, was a woman; and this done he must induce the caretaker to admit him to the inside of the house. Once within the building the refugee promised himself he would bring the slumberous Slack to consciousness if he had to beat down that individual's door doing it. He centred his attack upon the bottom push button of all. Directly, from almost beneath his feet, came the sound of an areaway window being unlatched, and a drowsy female somewhat crossly inquired to know who might be there and what might be wanted.

"It's a gentleman calling on Mr. Slack," wheezed Mr. Leary with his head over the balusters. He was getting so very, very hoarse. "I've been ringing his bell, but I can't seem to get any answer."

"A gentleman at this time o' night!" The tone was purely incredulous.

"Yes; a close friend of Mr. Slack's," assured Mr. Leary, striving to put stress of urgency into his accents, and only succeeding in imparting an added hoarseness to his fast-failing vocal cords. "I'm his law partner, in fact. I must see him at once, please—it's very important, very pressing indeed."

"Well, you can't be seein him."

"C-can't see him? What do you mean?"

"I mean he ain't here, that's what. He's out. He's went out for the night. He's ginerally always out on Friday nights—playin' cards at his club, I think. And sometimes he don't come in till it's near breakfast time. If you're a friend of his I sh'd think it'd be likely you'd know that same."

"Oh, I do—I do," assented Mr. Leary earnestly; "only I had forgotten it. I've had so many other things on my mind. But surely he'll be coming in quite soon now—it's pretty late, you know."

"Don't I know that for myself without bein' told?"

"Yes, quite so, of course; naturally so." Mr. Leary was growing more and more nervous, and more and more chilled, too. "But if you'll only be so very kind as to let me in I'll wait for him in his apartment."

"Let you in without seein' you or knowin' what your business is? I should guess not! Besides, you couldn't be gettin' inside his flat anyways. He's locked it unless he's forgot to,

which ain't likely, him bein' a careful man, and he must a-took the key with him. I know I ain't got it."

"But if you'll just let me inside the building that will be sufficient. I would much rather wait inside if only in the hall, than out here on the stoop in the cold."

"No doubt, no doubt you would all of that." The tone of the unseen female was dryly suspicious. "But is it likely I'd be lettin' a stranger into the place, that I never seen before, and ain't seen yet for that matter, just on the strength of his own word? And him comin' unbeknownst, at this hour of the mornin'? A fat chancet!"

"But surely, though, you must recall me—Mr. Leary, his partner. I've been here before. I've spoken to you."

"That voice don't sound to me like no voice I ever heard."

"I've taken cold—that's why it's altered."

"So? Then why don't you come down here where I can have a look at you and make sure?" inquired this careful chatelaine.

"I'm leaning with my head over the rail of the steps right above you," said Mr. Leary. "Can't you poke your head out and see my face? I'm quite sure you would recall me then."

"With this here iron gratin' acrost me window how could I poke me head out? Besides, it's dark. Say, mister, if you're on the level what's

the matter with you comin' down here and not be standin' there palaverin' all the night?"

"I—I—well, you see, I'd rather not come for just a minute—until I've explained to you that —that my appearance may strike you as being a trifle unusual, in fact, I might say, queer," pleaded Mr. Leary, seeking by subtle methods of indirection to prepare her for what must surely follow.

"Never mind explainin'—gimme a look!" The suspicious tenseness in her voice increased. "I tell you this—ayther you come down here right this secont or I shut the window and you can be off or you can go to the divil or go anywheres you please for all of me, because I'm an overworked woman and I need me rest and I've no more time to waste on you."

"Wait, please; I'm coming immediately," called out Mr. Leary.

He forced his legs to carry him down the steps and reluctantly, yet briskly, he propelled his pink-hued person toward the ray of light that streamed out through the grated window-opening and fell across the areaway.

"You mustn't judge by first appearances," he was explaining with a false and transparent attempt at matter-of-factness as he came into the zone of illumination. "I'm not what I seem, exactly. You see, I——"

"Mushiful Evans!" The exclamation was half shrieked, half gasped out; and on the words the window was slammed to, the light within

flipped out, and through the glass from within came a vehement warning.

"Get away, you—you lunatic! Get away from here now or I'll have the cops on you."

"But please, please listen," he entreated, with his face close against the bars. "I assure you, madam, that I can explain everything if you will only listen."

There was no mercy, no suggestion of relenting in the threatening message that came back to him.

"If you ain't gone from here in ten seconts I'll ring for the night watchman on the block, and I'll blow a whistle for the police. I've got me hand on the alarm hook right now. Will you go or will I rouse the whole block?"

"Pray be calm, madam, I'll go. In fact, I'm going now."

He fell back out of the areaway. Fresh uproar at this critical juncture would be doubly direful. It would almost certainly bring the vengeful Switzer, with his bruised shanks. It would inevitably bring some one.

X

Mr. Leary retreated to the sidewalk, figuratively casting from him the shards and potsherds of his reawakened anticipations, now all so rudely shattered again. He was doomed. It would inevitably be his fate to cower in these cold and drafty purlieus until——

No, it wouldn't either!

Like a golden rift in a sable sky a brand-new ray of cheer opened before him. Who were those married friends of Slacks', who lived on the third floor—friends with whom once upon a time he and Slack had shared a chafing-dish supper? What was the name? Brady? No, Braydon. That was it—Mr. and Mrs. Edward Braydon. He would slip back again, on noiseless feet, to the doorway where the bells were. He would bide there until the startled caretaker had gone back to her sleep, or at least to her bed. Then he would play a solo on the Braydons' bell until he roused them. They would let him in, and beyond the peradventure of a doubt, they would understand what seemed to be beyond the ken of flighty and excitable underlings. He would make them understand, once he was in and once the first shock of beholding him had abated within them. They were a kindly, hospitable couple, the Braydons were. They would be only too glad to give him shelter from the elements until Bob Slack returned from his session at bridge. He was saved!

Within the coping of the stoop he crouched and waited—waited for five long palpitating minutes which seemed to him as hours. Then he applied an eager and quivering finger to the Braydons' button. Sweet boon of vouchsafed mercy! Almost instantly the latch clicked. And now in another instant Mr. Leary was

within solid walls, with the world and the weather shut out behind him.

He stood a moment, palpitant with mute thanksgiving, in the hallway, which was made obscure rather than bright by a tiny pinprick of gaslight; and as thus he stood, fortifying himself with resolution for the embarrassing necessity of presenting himself, in all his show of quaint frivolity, before these comparative strangers, there came floating down the stair well to him in a sharp half-whisper a woman's voice.

"Is that you?" it asked.

"Yes," answered Mr. Leary, truthfully. It was indeed he, Algernon Leary, even though someone else seemingly was expected. But the explanation could wait until he was safely upstairs. Indeed, it must wait. Attempted at a distance it would take on rather a complicated aspect; besides, the caretaker just below might overhear, and by untoward interruptions complicate a position already sufficiently delicate and difficult.

Down from above came the response, "All right then. I've been worried, you were so late coming in, Edward. Please slip in quietly and take the front room. I'm going on back to bed."

"All right!" grunted Mr. Leary.

But already his plan had changed; the second speech down the stair well had caused him to change it. Safety first would be his motto from now on. Seeing that Mr. Edward Braydon

apparently was likewise out late it would be wiser and infinitely more discreet on his part did he avoid further disturbing Mrs. Braydon, who presumably was alone and who might be easily frightened. So he would just slip on past the Braydon apartment, and in the hallway on the fourth floor he would cannily bide, awaiting the truant Slack's arrival.

On tiptoe then, flight by flight, he ascended toward the top of the house. He was noiselessly progressing along the hallway of the third floor; he was about midway of it when under his tread a loose plank gave off an agonized squeak, and, as involuntarily he crouched, right at his side a door was flung open.

What the discomfited refugee saw, at a distance from him to be measured by inches rather than by feet, was the face of a woman; and not the face of young Mrs. Edward Braydon, either, but the face of a middle-aged lady with startled eyes widely staring, with a mouth just dropping ajar as sudden horror relaxed her jaw muscles, and with a head of gray hair haloed about by a sort of nimbus effect of curl papers. What the strange lady saw—well, what the strange lady saw may best perhaps be gauged by what she did, and that was instantly to slam and bolt the door and then to utter a succession of calliopelike shrieks, which echoed through the house and which immediately were answered back by a somewhat similar series of outcries from the direction of the basement.

XI

Up the one remaining flight of stairs darted the intruder. He flung himself with all his weight and all his force against Bob Slack's door. It wheezed from the impact, but its stout oaken panels held fast. Who says the impossible is really impossible? The accumulated testimony of the ages shows that given the emergency a man can do anything he just naturally has to do. Neither by training nor by habit of life nor yet by figure was Mr. Leary athletically inclined, but a trained gymnast might well have envied the magnificent agility with which he put a foot upon the doorknob and sprang upward, poising himself there upon a slippered toe, with one set of fingers clutching fast to the minute projections of the door frame while with his free hand he thrust recklessly against the transom.

The transom gave under the strain, moving upward and inward upon its hinges, disclosing an oblong gap above the jamb. With a splendid wriggle the fugitive vaulted up, thrusting his person into the clear space thus provided. Balanced across the opening upon his stomach, half in and half out, for one moment he remained there, his legs kicking wildly as though for a purchase against something more solid than air. Then convulsive desperation triumphed over physical limitations. There was a rending, tearing sound as of some silken fabric being parted biaswise of its fibres, and Mr.

Leary's droll after-sections vanished inside; and practically coincidentally therewith, Mr. Leary descended upon the rugged floor with a thump which any other time would have stunned him into temporary helplessness, but which now had the effect merely of stimulating him onward to fresh exertion.

In a fever of activity he sprang up. Pawing a path through the encompassing darkness, stumbling into and over various sharp-cornered objects, barking his limbs with contusions and knowing it not, he found the door of the inner room—Bob Slack's bedroom—and once within that sanctuary he, feeling along the walls, discovered a push bulb and switched on the electric lights.

What matter though the whole house grew clamorous now with a mounting and increasing tumult? What mattered it though he could hear more and more startled voices commingled with the shattering shrieks emanating from the Braydon apartment beneath his feet? He, the hard-pressed and sore-beset and the long-suffering, was at last beyond the sight of mortal eyes. He was locked in, with two rooms and a bath to himself, and he meant to maintain his present refuge, meant to hold this fort against all comers, until Bob Slack came home. He would barricade himself in if need be. He would pile furniture against the doors. If they took him at all it would be by direct assault and overpowering numbers.

And while he withstood siege and awaited attack he would rid himself of these unlucky caparisons that had been his mortification and his undoing. When they broke in on him—if they did break in on him—he would be found wearing some of Bob Slack's clothes. Better far to be mistaken for a burglar than to be dragged forth lamentably yet fancifully attired as Himself at the Age of Three. The one thing might be explained—and in time would be; but the other? He felt that he was near the breaking point; that he could no more endure.

XII

He stopped where he was, in the middle of the room, with his eyes and his hands seeking for the seams of the closing of his main garment. Then he remembered what in his stress he had forgotten—the opening or perhaps one should say the closing was at the back. He twisted his arms rearward, his fingers groping along his spine.

Now any normal woman has the abnormal ability to do and then to undo a garment hitching behind. Nature, which so fashioned her elbows that she cannot throw a stone at a hen in the way in which a stone properly should be thrown at a hen, made suitable atonement for this articular oversight by endowing her joints with the facile knack of turning on exactly the right angle, with never danger of sprain or dislocation, for the subjugation of a

back-latching frock. Moreover, years of practice have given her adeptness in accomplishing this achievement, so that to her it has become an everyday feat. But man has neither the experience to qualify him nor yet the bodily adaptability.

By reaching awkwardly up and over his shoulder Mr. Leary managed to tug the topmost button of his array of buttons out of its attendant buttonholes, but below and beyond that point he could not progress. He twisted and contorted his body; he stretched his arms in their sockets until twin pangs of agony met and crossed between his shoulder blades, and with his two exploring hands he pulled and fumbled and pawed and wrenched and wrested, to make further headway at his task. But the sewing-on had been done with stout thread; the buttonholes were taut and snug and well made. Those slippery flat surfaces amply resisted him. They eluded him; defied him; outmastered him. Thanks be to, or curses be upon, the passionate zeal of Miss Rowena Skiff for exactitudes, he, lacking the offices of an assistant undresser, was now as definitely and finally inclosed in this distressful pink garment as though it had been his own skin. Speedily he recognized this fact in all its bitter and abominable truth, but mechanically he continued to wrestle with the obdurate fastenings.

While he thus vainly contended, events in which he directly was concerned were occurring

beneath that roof. From within his refuge he heard the sounds of slamming doors, of hurrying footsteps, of excited voices merging into a distracted chorus; but above all else, and from the rest, two of these voices stood out by reason of their augmented shrillness, and Mr. Leary marked them both, for since he had just heard them he therefore might identify their respective unseen owners.

"There's something—there's somebody in the house!" At the top of its register one voice was repeating the warning over and over again, and judging by direction this alarmist was shrieking her words through a keyhole on the floor below him. "I saw it—him—whatever it was. I opened my door to look out in the hall and it—he—was right there. Oh, I could have touched him! And then it ran and I didn't see him any more and I slammed the door and began screaming."

"You seen what?"

The strident question seemed to come from far below, down in the depths of the house, where the caretaker abided.

"Whatever it was. I opened the door and he was right in the hall there glaring at me. I could have touched it. And then he ran and I——"

"What was he like? I ast what was he like —it's that I'm astin' you!" The janitress was the one who pressed for an answer.

For the moment the question, pointed though

it was, went unanswered. The main speaker—shrieker, rather—was plainly a person with a mania for details, and even in this emergency she intended, as now developed, to present all the principal facts in the case, and likewise all the incidental facts so far as these fell within her scope of knowledge.

"I was awake," she clarioned through the keyhole, speaking much faster than any one following this narrative can possibly hope to read the words. "I couldn't sleep. I never do sleep well when I'm in a strange house. And anyhow, I was all alone. My nephew by marriage—Mr. Edward Braydon, you know—had gone out with the gentleman who lives on the floor above to play cards, and he said he was going to be gone nearly all night, and my niece—I'm Mrs. Braydon's unmarried aunt from Poughkeepsie and I'm down here visiting them—my niece was called to Long Island yesterday by illness—it's her sister who's ill with something like the bronchitis. And he was gone and so she was gone, and so here I was all alone and he told me not to stay up for him, but I couldn't sleep well—I never can sleep in a strange house—and just a few minutes ago I heard the bell ring and I supposed he had forgotten to take his latchkey with him, and so I got up to let him in. And I called down the stairs and asked him if it was him and he answered back. But it didn't sound like his voice. But I didn't think any-

thing of that. But, of course, it was out of the ordinary for him to have a voice like that. But all the same I went back to bed. But he didn't come in and I was just getting up again to see what detained him—his voice really sounded so strange I thought then he might have been taken sick or something. But just as I got to the door a plank creaked and I opened the door and there it was right where I could have touched him. And then it ran—and oh, what if——"

"I'm astin' you once more what it was like?"

"How should I know except that——"

"Was it a big, fat, wild, bare-headed, scary, awful-lookin' scoundrel dressed in some kind of funny pink clothes?"

"Yes, that's it! That's him—he was all sort of pink. Oh, did you see him too? Oh, is it a burglar?"

"Burglar nothin'! It's a ravin', rampagin' lunatic—that's what it is!"

"Oh, my heavens, a lunatic?"

"Sure it is. He tried to git me to let him in and——"

"Oh, whatever shall we do!"

XIII

"Hey, what's all the excitement about?"

A new and deeper voice here broke into the babel, and Mr. Leary recognizing it at a distance, where he stood listening—but not failing, even while he listened, to strive unavailingly

with his problem of buttons—knew he was saved. Knowing this he nevertheless retreated still deeper into the inner room. The thought of spectators in numbers remained very abhorrent to him. So he did not hear all that happened next, except in broken snatches.

He gathered though, from what he did hear, that Bob Slack and Mr. Edward Braydon were coming up the stairs, and that a third male whom they called Officer was coming with them, and that the janitress was coming likewise, and that divers lower-floor tenants were joining in the march, and that as they came the janitress was explaining to all and sundry how the weird miscreant had sought to inveigle her into admitting him to Mr. Slack's rooms, and how she had refused, and how with maniacal craft—or words to that effect—he had, nevertheless, managed to secure admittance to the house, and how he must still be in the house. And through all her discourse there were questions from this one or that, crossing its flow but in nowise interrupting it; and through it all percolated hootingly the terrorized outcries of Mr. Braydon's maiden aunt-in-law, issuing through the keyhole of the door behind which she cowered. Only now she was interjecting a new harassment into the already complicated mystery by pleading that someone repair straightway to her and render assistance, as she felt herself to be on the verge of fainting dead away.

With searches into closets and close scrutiny of all dark corners passed en route, the procession advanced to the top floor, mainly guided in its oncoming by the clew deduced from the circumstances of the mad intruder having betrayed a desire to secure access to Mr. Slack's apartment, with the intention, as the caretaker more than once suggested on her way up, of murdering Mr. Slack in his bed. Before the ascent had been completed she was quite certain this was the correct deduction, and so continued to state with all the emphasis of which she was capable.

"He couldn't possibly have got downstairs again," somebody hazarded; "so he must be upstairs here still—must be right round here somewhere."

"Didn't I tell you he was lookin' for Mr. Slack to lay in wait for him and destroy the poor man in his bed?" shrilled the caretaker.

"Watch carefully now, everybody. He might rush out of some corner at us."

"Say, my transom's halfway open!" Mr. Bob Slack exclaimed. "And by Jove, there's a light shining through it yonder from the bedroom. He's inside—we've got him cornered, whoever he is."

Boldly Mr. Slack stepped forward and rapped hard on the door.

"Better step on out peacebly," he called, "because there's an officer here with us and we've got you trapped."

"It's me, Bob, it's me," came in a wheezy, plaintive wail from somewhere well back in the apartment.

"Who's me?" demanded Mr. Slack, likewise forgetting his grammar in the thrill of this culminating moment.

"Algy—Algernon Leary."

"Not with that voice, it isn't. But I'll know in a minute who it is!" Mr. Slack reached pocketward for his keys.

"Better be careful. He might have a gun or something on him."

"Nonsense!" retorted Mr. Slack, feeling very valiant. "I'm not afraid of any gun. But you ladies might stand aside if you're frightened. All ready, officer? Now then!"

"Please come in by yourself, Bob. Don't —don't let anybody else come with you!"

XIV

If he heard the faint and agonized appeal from within Mr. Slack chose not to heed it. He found the right key on his key ring, applied it to the lock, turned the bolt and shoved the door wide open, giving back then in case of an attack. The front room was empty. Mr. Slack crossed cautiously to the inner room and peered across the threshold into it, Mr. Braydon and a graycoated private watchman and a procession of half-clad figures following along after him.

Where was the mysterious intruder? Ah,

there he was, huddled up in a far corner alongside the bed as though he sought to hide himself away from their glaring eyes. And at the sight of what he beheld Mr. Bob Slack gave one great shocked snort of surprise, and then one of recognition.

For all that the cowering wretch wore a quaint garment of a bright and watermelonish hue, except where it was streaked with transom dust and marked with ash-can grit; for all that his head was bare, and his knees, and a considerable section of his legs as well; for all that he had white socks and low slippers, now soaking wet, upon his feet; for all his elbow sleeves and his pink garters and his low neck; and finally for all that his face was now beginning, as they stared upon it, to wear the blank wan look of one who is about to succumb to a swoon of exhaustion induced by intense physical exertion or by acutely prolonged mental strain or by both together—Mr. Bob Slack detected in this fabulous oddity a resemblance to his associate in the practice of law at Number Thirty-two Broad Street.

"In the name of heaven, Leary——" he began.

But a human being can stand just so many shocks in a given number of minutes—just so many and no more. Gently, slowly, the gartered legs gave way, bending outward, and as their owner collapsed down upon his side with the light of consciousness flickering in his eyes,

his figure was half-turned to them, and they saw how that he was ornamentally but securely buttoned down the back with many large buttons and how that with a last futile fluttering effort of his relaxing hands he fumbled first at one and then at another of these buttons.

"Leary, what in thunder have you been doing? And where on earth have you been?" Mr. Slack shot the questions forth as he sprang to his partner's side and knelt alongside the slumped pink shape.

Languidly Mr. Leary opened one comatose eye. Then he closed it again and the wraith of a smile formed about his lips, and just as he went sound asleep upon the floor Mr. Slack caught from Mr. Leary the softly whispered words, "I've been the life of the party!"

IV
A PLEA FOR OLD CAP COLLIER

IV

A PLEA FOR OLD CAP COLLIER

FOR a good many years now I have been carrying this idea round with me. It was more or less of a loose and unformed idea, and it wouldn't jell. What brought it round to the solidification point was this: Here the other week, being half sick, I was laid up over Sunday in a small hotel in a small seacoast town. I had read all the newspapers and all the magazines I could get hold of. The local bookstore, of course, was closed. They won't let the oysters stay open on Sunday in that town. The only literature my fellow guests seemed interested in was mail-order tabs and price currents.

Finally, when despair was about to claim me for her own, I ran across an ancient Fifth Reader, all tattered and stained and having that smell of age which is common to old books and old sheep. I took it up to bed with me, and I read it through from cover to cover. Long before I was through the very idea which for so long had been sloshing round inside of

my head—this idea which, as one might say, had been aged in the wood—took shape. Then and there I decided that the very first chance I had I would sit me down and write a plea for Old Cap Collier.

In my youth I was spanked freely and frequently for doing many different things that were forbidden, and also for doing the same thing many different times and getting caught doing it. That, of course, was before the Boy Scout movement had come along to show how easily and how sanely a boy's natural restlessness and a boy's natural love for adventure may be directed into helpful channels; that was when nearly everything a normal, active boy craved to do was wrong and, therefore, held to be a spankable offense.

This was a general rule in our town. It did not especially apply to any particular household, but it applied practically to all the households with which I was in any way familiar. It was a community where an old-fashioned brand of applied theology was most strictly applied. Heaven was a place which went unanimously Democratic every fall, because all the Republicans had gone elsewhere. Hell was a place full of red-hot coals and clinkered sinners and unbaptized babies and a smell like somebody cooking ham, with a deputy devil coming in of a morning with an asbestos napkin draped over his arm and flicking a fireproof cockroach off the table cloth and leaning across the back

of Satan's chair and saying: "Good mornin', boss. How're you going to have your lost souls this mornin'—fried on one side or turned over?"

Sunday was three weeks long, and longer than that if it rained. About all a fellow could do after he'd come back from Sunday school was to sit round with his feet cramped into the shoes and stockings which he never wore on week days and with the rest of him incased in starchy, uncomfortable dress-up clothes—just sit round and sit round and itch. You couldn't scratch hard either. It was sinful to scratch audibly and with good, broad, free strokes, which is the only satisfactory way to scratch. In our town they didn't spend Sunday; they kept the Sabbath, which is a very different thing.

Looking back on my juvenile years it seems to me that, generally speaking, when spanked I deserved it. But always there were two punishable things against which—being disciplined—my youthful spirit revolted with a sort of inarticulate sense of injustice. One was for violation of the Sunday code, which struck me as wrong—the code, I mean, not the violation—without knowing exactly why it was wrong; and the other, repeated times without number, was when I had been caught reading *nickul libruries*, erroneously referred to by our elders as dime novels.

I read them at every chance; so did every

normal boy of my acquaintance. We traded lesser treasures for them; we swapped them on the basis of two old volumes for one new one; we maintained a clandestine circulating-library system which had its branch offices in every stable loft in our part of town. The more daring among us read them in school behind the shelter of an open geography propped up on the desk.

Shall you ever forget the horror of the moment when, carried away on the wings of adventure with Nick Carter or Big-Foot Wallace or Frank Reade or bully Old Cap, you forgot to flash occasional glances of cautious inquiry forward in order to make sure the teacher was where she properly should be, at her desk up in front, and read on and on until that subtle sixth sense which comes to you when a lot of people begin staring at you warned you something was amiss, and you looked up and round you and found yourself all surrounded by a ring of cruel, gloating eyes?

I say cruel advisedly, because up to a certain age children are naturally more cruel than tigers. Civilization has provided them with tools, as it were, for practicing cruelty, whereas the tiger must rely only on his teeth and his bare claws. So you looked round, feeling that the shadow of an impending doom encompassed you, and then you realized that for no telling how long the teacher had been standing just behind you, reading over your shoulder.

And at home were you caught in the act of reading them, or—what from the parental standpoint was almost as bad—in the act of harboring them? I was. Housecleaning times, when they found them hidden under furniture or tucked away on the back shelves of pantry closets, I was paddled until I had the feelings of a slice of hot buttered toast somewhat scorched on the under side. And each time, having been paddled, I was admonished that boys who read dime novels—only they weren't dime novels at all but cost uniformly five cents a copy—always came to a bad end, growing up to be criminals or Republicans or something equally abhorrent. And I was urged to read books which would help me to shape my career in a proper course. Such books were put into my hands, and I loathed them. I know now why when I grew up my gorge rose and my appetite turned against so-called classics. Their style was so much like the style of the books which older people wanted me to read when I was in my early teens.

Such were the specious statements advanced by the oldsters. And we had no reply for their argument, or if we had one could not find the language in which to couch it. Besides there was another and a deeper reason. A boy, being what he is, the most sensitive and the most secretive of living creatures regarding his innermost emotions, rarely does bare his real thoughts to his elders, for they, alas, are not

young enough to have a fellow feeling, and they are too old and they know too much to be really wise.

What we might have answered, had we had the verbal facility and had we not feared further painful corporeal measures for talking back—or what was worse, ridicule—was that reading Old Cap Collier never yet sent a boy to a bad end. I never heard of a boy who ran away from home and really made a go of it who was actuated at the start by the *nickul librury.* Burning with a sense of injustice, filled up with the realization that we were not appreciated at home, we often talked of running away and going out West to fight Indians, but we never did. I remember once two of us started for the Far West, and got nearly as far as Oak Grove Cemetery, when—the dusk of evening impending—we decided to turn back and give our parents just one more chance to understand us.

What, also, we might have pointed out was that in a five-cent story the villain was absolutely sure of receiving suitable and adequate punishment for his misdeeds. Right then and there, on the spot, he got his. And the heroine was always so pluperfectly pure. And the hero always was a hero to his finger tips, never doing anything unmanly or wrong or cowardly, and always using the most respectful language in the presence of the opposite sex. There was never any sex problem in a *nickul librury.*

There were never any smutty words or questionable phrases. If a villain said "Curse you!" he was going pretty far. Any one of us might whet up our natural instincts for cruelty on Foxe's Book of Martyrs, or read all manner of unmentionable horrors in the Old Testament, but except surreptitiously we couldn't walk with Nick Carter, whose motives were ever pure and who never used the naughty word even in the passion of the death grapple with the top-booted forces of sinister evil.

We might have told our parents, had we had the words in which to state the case and they but the patience to listen, that in a *nickul librury* there was logic and the thrill of swift action and the sharp spice of adventure. There, invariably virtue was rewarded and villainy confounded; there, inevitably was the final triumph for law and for justice and for the right; there, embalmed in one thin paper volume, was all that Sanford and Merton lacked; all that the Rollo books never had. We might have told them that though the Leatherstocking Tales and Robinson Crusoe and Two Years Before the Mast and Ivanhoe were all well enough in their way, the trouble with them was that they mainly were so long-winded. It took so much time to get to where the first punch was, whereas Ned Buntline or Col. Prentiss Ingraham would hand you an exciting jolt on the very first page, and sometimes in the very first paragraph.

You take J. Fenimore Cooper now. He meant well and he had ideas, but his Indians were so everlastingly slow about getting under way with their scalping operations! Chapter after chapter there was so much fashionable and difficult language that the plot was smothered. You couldn't see the woods for the trees.

But it was the accidental finding of an ancient and reminiscent volume one Sunday in a little hotel which gave me the cue to what really made us such confirmed rebels against constituted authority, in a literary way of speaking. The thing which inspired us with hatred for the so-called juvenile classic was a thing which struck deeper even than the sentiments I have been trying to describe.

The basic reason, the underlying motive, lay in the fact that in the schoolbooks of our adolescence, and notably in the school readers, our young mentalities were fed forcibly on a pap which affronted our intelligence at the same time that it cloyed our adolescent palates. It was not altogether the lack of action; it was more the lack of plain common sense in the literary spoon victuals which they ladled into us at school that caused our youthful souls to revolt. In the final analysis it was this more than any other cause which sent us up to the haymow for delicious, forbidden hours in the company of Calamity Jane and Wild Bill Hickok.

Midway of the old dog-eared reader which I picked up that day I came across a typical example of the sort of stuff I mean. I hadn't seen it before in twenty-five years; but now, seeing it, I remembered it as clearly almost as though it had been the week before instead of a quarter of a century before when for the first time it had been brought to my attention. It was a piece entitled The Shipwreck, and it began as follows:

In the winter of 1824 Lieutenant G——, of the United States Navy, with his beautiful wife and child, embarked in a packet at Norfolk bound to South Carolina.

So far so good. At least, here is a direct beginning. A family group is going somewhere. There is an implied promise that before they have traveled very far something of interest to the reader will happen to them. Sure enough, the packet runs into a storm and founders. As she is going down Lieutenant G—— puts his wife and baby into a lifeboat manned by sailors, and then—there being no room for him in the lifeboat—he remains behind upon the deck of the sinking vessel, while the lifeboat puts off for shore. A giant wave overturns the burdened cockleshell and he sees its passengers engulfed in the waters. Up to this point the chronicle has been what a chronicle should be. Perhaps the phraseology has been a trifle top-loftical, and there are a few words in it long

enough to run as serials, yet at any rate we are getting an effect in drama. But bear with me while I quote the next paragraph, just as I copied it down:

The wretched husband saw but too distinctly the destruction of all he held dear. But here alas and forever were shut off from him all sublunary prospects. He fell upon the deck—powerless, senseless, a corpse—the victim of a sublime sensibility!

There's language for you! How different it is from that historic passage when the crack of Little Sure Shot's rifle rang out and another Redskin bit the dust. Nothing is said there about anybody having his sublunary prospects shut off; nothing about the Redskin becoming the victim of a sublime sensibility. In fifteen graphic words and in one sentence Little Sure Shot croaked him, and then with bated breath you moved on to the next paragraph, sure of finding in it yet more attractive casualties snappily narrated.

No, sir! In the *nickul librury* the author did not waste his time and yours telling you that an individual on becoming a corpse would simultaneously become powerless and senseless. He credited your intelligence for something. For contrast, take the immortal work entitled Deadwood Dick of Deadwood; or, The Picked Party; by Edward L. Wheeler, a copy of which has just come to my attention again nearly

thirty years after the time of my first reading of it. Consider the opening paragraph:

The sun was just kissing the mountain tops that frowned down upon Billy-Goat Gulch, and in the aforesaid mighty seam in the face of mighty Nature the shadows of a warm June night were gathering rapidly.

The birds had mostly hushed their songs and flown to their nests in the dismal lonely pines, and only the tuneful twang of a well-played banjo aroused the brooding quiet, save it be the shrill, croaking screams of a crow, perched upon the top of a dead pine, which rose from the nearly perpendicular mountain side that retreated in the ascending from the gulch bottom.

That, as I recall, was a powerfully long bit of description for a *nickul librury*, and having got it out of his system Mr. Wheeler wasted no more valuable space on the scenery. From this point on he gave you action—action with reason behind it and logic to it and the guaranty of a proper climax and a satisfactory conclusion to follow. Deadwood Dick marched many a flower-strewn mile through my young life, but to the best of my recollection he never shut off anybody's sublunary prospects. If a party deserved killing Deadwood just naturally up and killed him, and the historian told about it in graphic yet straightforward terms of speech; and that was all there was to it, and that was all there should have been to it.

At the risk of being termed an iconoclast

and a smasher of the pure high ideals of the olden days, I propose to undertake to show that practically all of the preposterous asses and the impossible idiots of literature found their way into the school readers of my generation. With the passage of years there may have been some reform in this direction, but I dare affirm, without having positive knowledge of the facts, that a majority of these half-wits still are being featured in the grammar-grade literature of the present time. The authors of school readers, even modern school readers, surely are no smarter than the run of grown-ups even, say, as you and as I; and we blindly go on holding up as examples before the eyes of the young of the period the characters and the acts of certain popular figures of poetry and prose who—did but we give them the acid test of reason—would reveal themselves either as incurable idiots, or else as figures in scenes and incidents which physically could never have occurred.

You remember, don't you, the schoolbook classic of the noble lad who by reason of his neat dress, and by his use in the most casual conversation of the sort of language which the late Mr. Henry James used when he was writing his very Jamesiest, secured a job as a trusted messenger in the large city store or in the city's large store, if we are going to be purists about it, as the boy in question undoubtedly was?

It seems that he had supported his widowed

mother and a large family of brothers and sisters by shoveling snow and, I think, laying brick or something of that technical nature. After this lapse of years I won't be sure about the bricklaying, but at any rate, work was slack in his regular line, and so he went to the proprietor of this vast retail establishment and procured a responsible position on the strength of his easy and graceful personal address and his employment of some of the most stylish adjectives in the dictionary. At this time he was nearly seven years old—yes, sir, actually nearly seven. We have the word of the schoolbook for it. We should have had a second chapter on this boy. Probably at nine he was being considered for president of Yale—no, Harvard. He would know too much to be president of Yale.

Then there was the familiar instance of the Spartan youth who having stolen a fox and hidden it inside his robe calmly stood up and let the animal gnaw his vitals rather than be caught with it in his possession. But, why? I ask you, why? What was the good of it all? What object was served? To begin with, the boy had absconded with somebody else's fox, or with somebody's else fox, which is undoubtedly the way a compiler of school readers would phrase it. This, right at the beginning, makes the morality of the transaction highly dubious. In the second place, he showed poor taste. If he was going to swipe something, why should

he not have swiped a chicken or something else of practical value?

We waive that point, though, and come to the lack of discretion shown by the fox. He starts eating his way out through the boy, a mussy and difficult procedure, when merely by biting an aperture in the tunic he could have emerged by the front way with ease and dispatch. And what is the final upshot of it all? The boy falls dead, with a large unsightly gap in the middle of him. Probably, too, he was a boy whose parents were raising him for their own purposes. As it is, all gnawed up in this fashion and deceased besides, he loses his attractions for everyone except the undertaker. The fox presumably has an attack of acute indigestion. And there you are! Compare the moral of this with the moral of any one of the Old Cap Collier series, where virtue comes into its own and sanity is prevalent throughout and vice gets what it deserves, and all.

In McGuffey's Third Reader, I think it was, occurred that story about the small boy who lived in Holland among the dikes and dams, and one evening he went across the country to carry a few illustrated post cards or some equally suitable gift to a poor blind man, and on his way back home in the twilight he discovered a leak in the sea wall. If he went for help the breach might widen while he was gone and the whole structure give way, and then the sea would come roaring in, carrying death and

destruction and windmills and wooden shoes and pineapple cheeses on its crest. At least, this is the inference one gathers from reading Mr. McGuffey's account of the affair.

So what does the quick-witted youngster do? He shoves his little arm in the crevice on the inner side, where already the water is trickling through, thus blocking the leak. All night long he stays there, one small, half-frozen Dutch boy holding back the entire North Atlantic. Not until centuries later, when Judge Alton B. Parker runs for president against Colonel Roosevelt and is defeated practically by acclamation, is there to be presented so historic and so magnificent an example of a contest against tremendous odds. In the morning a peasant, going out to mow the tulip beds, finds the little fellow crouched at the foot of the dike and inquires what ails him. The lad, raising his weary head—but wait, I shall quote the exact language of the book:

"I am hindering the sea from running in," was the simple reply of the child.

Simple? I'll say it is! Positively nothing could be simpler unless it be the stark simplicity of the mind of an author who figures that when the Atlantic Ocean starts boring its way through a crack in a sea wall you can stop it by plugging the whole on the inner side of the sea wall with a small boy's arm. Ned Buntline may never have enjoyed the vogue among parents and

teachers that Mr. McGuffey enjoyed, but I'll say this for him—he knew more about the laws of hydraulics than McGuffey ever dreamed.

And there was Peter Hurdle, the ragged lad who engaged in a long but tiresome conversation with the philanthropic and inquisitive Mr. Lenox, during the course of which it developed that Peter didn't want anything. When it came on to storm he got under a tree. When he was hungry he ate a raw turnip. Raw turnips, it would appear, grew all the year round in the fields of the favored land where Peter resided. If the chill winds of autumn blew in through one of the holes in Peter's trousers they blew right out again through another hole. And he didn't care to accept the dime which Mr. Lenox in an excess of generosity offered him, because, it seemed, he already had a dime. When it came to being plumb contented there probably never was a soul on this earth that was the equal of Master Hurdle. He even was satisfied with his name, which I would regard as the ultimate test.

Likewise, there was the case of Hugh Idle and Mr. Toil. Perhaps you recall that moving story? Hugh tries to dodge work; wherever he goes he finds Mr. Toil in one guise or another but always with the same harsh voice and the same frowning eyes, bossing some job in a manner which would cost him his boss-ship right off the reel in these times when union labor is so touchy. And what is the moral to

be drawn from this narrative? I know that all my life I have been trying to get away from work, feeling that I was intended for leisure, though never finding time somehow to take it up seriously. But what was the use of trying to discourage me from this agreeable idea back yonder in the formulative period of my earlier years?

In Harper's Fourth Reader, edition of 1888, I found an article entitled The Difference Between the Plants and Animals. It takes up several pages and includes some of the fanciest language the senior Mr. Harper could disinter from the Unabridged. In my own case—and I think I was no more observant than the average urchin of my age—I can scarcely remember a time when I could not readily determine certain basic distinctions between such plants and such animals as a child is likely to encounter in the temperate parts of North America.

While emerging from infancy some of my contemporaries may have fallen into the error of the little boy who came into the house with a haunted look in his eye and asked his mother if mulberries had six legs apiece and ran round in the dust of the road, and when she told him that such was not the case with mulberries he said: "Then, mother, I feel that I have made a mistake."

To the best of my recollection, I never made this mistake, or at least if I did I am sure I made no inquiry afterward which might tend

further to increase my doubts; and in any event I am sure that by the time I was old enough to stumble over Mr. Harper's favorite big words I was old enough to tell the difference between an ordinary animal—say, a house cat—and any one of the commoner forms of plant life, such as, for example, the scaly-bark hickory tree, practically at a glance. I'll add this too: Nick Carter never wasted any of the golden moments which he and I spent together in elucidating for me the radical points of difference between the plants and the animals.

In the range of poetry selected by the compilers of the readers for my especial benefit as I progressed onward from the primary class into the grammar grades I find on examination of these earlier American authorities an even greater array of chuckleheads than appear in the prose divisions. I shall pass over the celebrated instance—as read by us in class in a loud tone of voice and without halt for inflection or the taking of breath—of the Turk who at midnight in his guarded tent was dreaming of the hour when Greece her knees in suppliance bent would tremble at his power. I remember how vaguely I used to wonder who it was that was going to grease her knees and why she should feel called upon to have them greased at all. Also, I shall pass over the instance of Abou Ben Adhem, whose name led all the rest in the golden book in which the angel was writing. Why shouldn't it have led

all the rest? A man whose front name begins with Ab, whose middle initial is B, and whose last name begins with Ad, will be found leading all the rest in any city directory or any telephone list anywhere. Alphabetically organized as he was, Mr. Adhem just naturally had to lead; and yet for hours on end my teacher consumed her energies and mine in a more or less unsuccessful effort to cause me to memorize the details as set forth by Mr. Leigh Hunt.

In three separate schoolbooks, each the work of a different compilator, I discover Sir Walter Scott's poetic contribution touching on Young Lochinvar—Young Lochinvar who came out of the West, the same as the Plumb plan subsequently came, and the Hiram Johnson presidential boom and the initiative and the referendum and the I. W. W. Even in those ancient times the West appears to have been a favorite place for upsetting things to come from; so I can't take issue with Sir Walter there. But I do take issue with him where he says:

So light to the croupe the fair lady he swung,
So light to the saddle before her he sprung!

Even in childhood's hour I am sure I must have questioned the ability of Young Lochinvar to perform this achievement, for I was born and brought up in a horseback-riding country. Now in the light of yet fuller experience I wish Sir Walter were alive to-day so I might argue the question out with him.

Let us consider the statement on its physical merits solely. Here we have Young Lochinvar swinging the lady to the croupe, and then he springs to the saddle in front of her. Now to do this he must either take a long running start and leapfrog clear over the lady's head as she sits there, and land accurately in the saddle, which is scarcely a proper thing to do to any lady, aside from the difficulty of springing ten or fifteen feet into the air and coming down, crotched out, on a given spot, or else he must contribute a feat in contortion the like of which has never been duplicated since.

To be brutally frank about it, the thing just naturally is not possible. I don't care if Young Lochinvar was as limber as a string of fresh eels—and he certainly did shake a lithesome calf in the measures of the dance if Sir Walter, in an earlier stanza, is to be credited with veracity. Even so, I deny that he could have done that croupe trick. There isn't a croupier at Monte Carlo who could have done it. Buffalo Bill couldn't have done it. Ned Buntline wouldn't have had Buffalo Bill trying to do it. Doug Fairbanks couldn't do it. I couldn't do it myself.

Skipping over Robert Southey's tiresome redundancy in spending so much of his time and mine, when I was in the Fifth-Reader stage, in telling how the waters came down at Ladore when it was a petrified cinch that they, being waters, would have to come down, any-

how, I would next direct your attention to two of the foremost idiots in all the realm of poesy; one a young idiot and one and older idiot, probably with whiskers, but both embalmed in verse, and both, mind you, stuck into every orthodox reader to be glorified before the eyes of childhood. I refer to that juvenile champion among idiots, the boy who stood on the burning deck, and to the ship's captain, in the poem called The Tempest. Let us briefly consider the given facts as regards the latter: It was winter and it was midnight and a storm was on the deep, and the passengers were huddled in the cabin and not a soul would dare to sleep, and they were shuddering there in silence —one gathers the silence was so deep you could hear them shuddering—and the stoutest held his breath, which is considerable feat, as I can testify, because the stouter a fellow gets the harder it is for him to hold his breath for any considerable period of time. Very well, then, this is the condition of affairs. If ever there was a time when those in authority should avoid spreading alarm this was the time. By all the traditions of the maritime service it devolved upon the skipper to remain calm, cool and collected. But what does the poet reveal to a lot of trusting school children?

"We are lost!" the captain shouted,
As he staggered down the stair.

He didn't whisper it; he didn't tell it to a friend in confidence; he bellowed it out at the top of his voice so all the passengers could hear him. The only possible excuse which can be offered for that captain's behavior is that his staggering was due not to the motion of the ship but to alcoholic stimulant. Could you imagine Little Sure Shot, the Terror of the Pawnees, drunk or sober, doing an asinine thing liked that? Not in ten thousand years, you couldn't. But then we must remember that Little Sure Shot, being a moral dime-novel hero, never indulged in alcoholic beverages under any circumstances.

The boy who stood on the burning deck has been played up as an example of youthful heroism for the benefit of the young of our race ever since Mrs. Felicia Dorothea Hemans set him down in black and white. I deny that he was heroic. I insist that he merely was feeble-minded. Let us give this youth the careful once-over: The scene is the Battle of the Nile. The time is August, 1798. When the action of the piece begins the boy stands on the burning deck whence all but him had fled. You see, everyone else aboard had had sense enough to beat it, but he stuck because his father had posted him there. There was no good purpose he might serve by sticking, except to furnish added material for the poetess, but like the leather-headed young imbecile that he was he stood there with his feet getting warmer all

the time, while the flame that lit the battle's wreck shone round him o'er the dead. After which:

There came a burst of thunder sound;
The boy—oh! where was he?
Ask of the winds, that far around
With fragments strewed the sea—

Ask the winds. Ask the fragments. Ask Mrs. Hemans. Or, to save time, inquire of me.

He has become totally extinct. He is no more and he never was very much. Still we need not worry. Mentally he must have been from the very outset a liability rather than an asset. Had he lived, undoubtedly he would have wound up in a home for the feeble-minded. It is better so, as it is—better that he should be spread about over the surface of the ocean in a broad general way, thus saving all the expense and trouble of gathering him up and burying him and putting a tombstone over him. He was one of the incurables.

Once upon a time, writing a little piece on another subject, I advanced the claim that the champion half-wit of all poetic anthology was Sweet Alice, who, as described by Mr. English, wept with delight when you gave her a smile, and trembled in fear at your frown. This of course was long before Prohibition came in. These times there are many ready to weep with delight when you offer to give them a smile; but in Mr. English's time and Alice's there

were plenty of saloons handy. I remarked, what an awful kill-joy Alice must have been, weeping in a disconcerting manner when somebody smiled in her direction and trembling violently should anybody so much as merely knit his brow!

But when I gave Alice first place in the list I acted too hastily. Second thought should have informed me that undeniably the post of honor belonged to the central figure of Mr. Henry W. Longfellow's poem, Excelsior. I ran across it—Excelsior, I mean—in three different readers the other day when I was compiling some of the data for this treatise. Naturally it would be featured in all three. It wouldn't do to leave Mr. Longfellow's hero out of a volume in which space was given to such lesser village idiots as Casabianca and the Spartan youth. Let us take up this sad case verse by verse:

The shades of night were falling fast,
As through an Alpine village passed
A youth, who bore, 'mid snow and ice,
A banner with the strange device,
Excelsior!

There we get an accurate pen picture of this young man's deplorable state. He is climbing a mountain in the dead of winter. It is made plain later on that he is a stranger in the neighborhood, consequently it is fair to assume that the mountain in question is one he has never climbed before. Nobody hired him to climb

any mountain; he isn't climbing it on a bet or because somebody dared him to climb one. He is not dressed for mountain climbing. Apparently he is wearing the costume in which he escaped from the institution where he had been an inmate—a costume consisting simply of low stockings, sandals and a kind of flowing woolen nightshirt, cut short to begin with and badly shrunken in the wash. He has on no rubber boots, no sweater, not even a pair of ear muffs. He also is bare-headed. Well, any time the wearing of hats went out of fashion he could have had no other use for his head, anyhow.

I grant you that in the poem Mr. Longfellow does not go into details regarding the patient's garb. I am going by the illustration in the reader. The original Mr. McGuffey was very strong for illustrations. He stuck them in everywhere in his readers, whether they matched the themes or not. Being as fond of pictures as he undoubtedly was, it seems almost a pity he did not marry the tattooed lady in a circus and then when he got tired of studying her pictorially on one side he could ask her to turn around and let him see what she had to say on the other side. Perhaps he did. I never gleaned much regarding the family history of the McGuffeys.

Be that as it may, the wardrobe is entirely unsuited for the rigors of the climate in Switzerland in winter time. Symptomatically it marks the wearer as a person who is mentally lacking.

He needs a keeper almost as badly as he needs some heavy underwear. But this isn't the worst of it. Take the banner. It bears the single word "Excelsior." The youth is going through a strange town late in the evening in his nightie, and it winter time, carrying a banner advertising a shredded wood-fiber commodity which won't be invented until a hundred and fifty years after he is dead!

Can you beat it? You can't even tie it.

Let us look further into the matter:

His brow was sad; his eyes beneath
Flashed like a falchion from its sheath,
And like a silver clarion rung
The accents of that unknown tongue,
"Excelsior!"

Get it, don t you? Even his features fail to jibe. His brow is corrugated with grief, but the flashing of the eye denotes a lack of intellectual coherence which any alienist would diagnose at a glance as evidence of total dementia, even were not confirmatory proof offered by his action in huckstering for a product which doesn't exist, in a language which no one present can understand. The most delirious typhoid fever patient you ever saw would know better than that.

To continue:

In happy homes he saw the light
Of household fires gleam warm and bright;

Above, the spectral glaciers shone,
And from his lips escaped a groan,
"Excelsior!"

The last line gives him away still more completely. He is groaning now, where a moment before he was clarioning. A bit later, with one of those shifts characteristic of the mentally unbalanced, his mood changes and again he is shouting. He's worse than a cuckoo clock, that boy.

"Try not the Pass," the old man said;
"Dark lowers the tempest overhead,
The roaring torrent is deep and wide!"
And loud that clarion voice replied,
"Excelsior!"

"Oh stay," the maiden said, "and rest
Thy weary head upon this breast!"
A tear stood in his bright blue eye,
But still he answered, with a sigh,
"Excelsior!"

"Beware the pine-tree's withered branch!
Beware the awful avalanche!"
This was the peasant's last Good night;
A voice replied, far up the height,
"Excelsior!"

These three verses round out the picture. The venerable citizen warns him against the Pass; pass privileges up that mountain have all been suspended. A kindhearted maiden tenders hospitalities of a most generous nature, con-

sidering that she never saw the young man before. Some people might even go so far as to say that she should have been ashamed of herself; others, that Mr. Longfellow, in giving her away, was guilty of an indelicacy, to say the least of it. Possibly she was practicing up to qualify for membership on the reception committee the next time the visiting firemen came to her town or when there was going to be an Elks' reunion; so I for one shall not question her motives. She was hospitable—let it go at that. The peasant couples with his good-night message a reference to the danger of falling pine wood and also avalanches, which have never been pleasant things to meet up with when one is traveling on a mountain in an opposite direction.

All about him firelights are gleaming, happy families are gathered before the hearthstone, and through the windows the evening yodel may be heard percolating pleasantly. There is every inducement for the youth to drop in and rest his poor, tired, foolish face and hands and thaw out his knee joints and give the maiden a chance to make good on that proposition of hers. But no, high up above timber line he has an engagement with himself and Mr. Longfellow to be frozen as stiff as a dried herring; and so, now groaning, now with his eyes flashing, now with a tear—undoubtedly a frozen tear—standing in the eye, now clarioning, now sighing, onward and upward he goes:

At break of day, as heavenward
The pious monks of Saint Bernard
Uttered the oft-repeated prayer,
A voice cried through the startled air,
"Excelsior!"

I'll say this much for him: He certainly is hard to kill. He can stay out all night in those clothes, with the thermometer below zero, and at dawn still be able to chirp the only word that is left in his vocabulary. He can't last forever though. There has to be a finish to this lamentable fiasco sometime. We get it:

A traveler, by the faithful hound,
Half buried in the snow was found,
Still grasping in his hand of ice
That banner with the strange device,
Excelsior!

There in the twilight cold and gray,
Lifeless, but beautiful, he lay,
And from the sky serene and far,
A voice fell, like a falling star,
"Excelsior!"

The meteoric voice said "Excelsior!" It should have said "Bonehead!" It would have said it, too, if Ned Buntline had been handling the subject, for he had a sense of verities, had Ned. Probably that was one of the reasons why they barred his works out of all the school-books.

With the passage of years I rather imagine that Lieutenant G——, of the United States Navy, who went to so much trouble and took so many needless pains in order to become a corpse may have vanished from the school readers. I admit I failed to find him in any of the modern editions through which I glanced, but I am able to report, as a result of my researches, that the well-known croupe specialist, Young Lochinvar, is still there, and so likewise is Casabianca, the total loss; and as I said before, I ran across Excelsior three times.

Just here the other day, when I was preparing the material for this little book, I happened upon an advertisement in a New York paper of an auction sale of a collection of so-called dime novels, dating back to the old Beadle's Boy's Library in the early eighties and coming on down through the years into the generation when Nick and Old Cap were succeeding some of the earlier favorites. I read off a few of the leading titles upon the list:

Bronze Jack, the California Thoroughbred; or, The Lost City of the Basaltic Buttes. A strange story of a desperate adventure after fortune in the weird, wild Apache land. By Albert W. Aiken.

Tombstone Dick, the Train Pilot; or, The Traitor's Trail. A story of the Arizona Wilds. By Ned Buntline.

The Tarantula of Taos; or, Giant George's

Revenge. A tale of Sardine-box City, Arizona. By Major Sam S. (Buckskin Sam) Hall.

Redtop Rube, the Vigilante Prince; or, The Black Regulators of Arizona. By Major E. L. St. Vrain.

Old Grizzly Adams, the Bear Tamer; or, The Monarch of the Mountains.

Deadly Eye and the Prairie Rover.

Arizona Joe, the Boy Pard of Texas Jack.

Pacific Pete, the Prince of the Revolver.

Kit Carson, King of the Guides.

Leadville Nick, the Boy Sport; or, The Mad Miner's Revenge.

Lighthouse Lige; or, The Firebrand of the Everglades.

The Desperate Dozen; or, The Fair Fiend.

Nighthawk Kit; or, The Daughter of the Ranch.

Joaquin, the Saddle King.

Mustang Sam, the Wild Rider of the Plains.

Adventures of Wild Bill, the Pistol Prince, from Youth to his Death by Assassination. Deeds of Daring, Adventure and Thrilling Incidents in the Life of J. B. Hickok, known to the World as Wild Bill.

These titles and many another did I read, and reading them my mind slid back along a groove in my brain to a certain stable loft in a certain Kentucky town, and I said to myself that if I had a boy—say, about twelve or fourteen years old—I would go to this auction and bid in these books and I would back them up

and reënforce them with some of the best of the collected works of Nick Carter and Cap Collier and Nick Carter, Jr., and Frank Reade, and I would buy, if I could find it anywhere, a certain paper-backed volume dealing with the life of the James boys—not Henry and William, but Jesse and Frank—which I read ever so long ago; and I would confer the whole lot of them upon that offspring of mine and I would say to him:

"Here, my son, is something for you; a rare and precious gift. Read these volumes openly. Never mind the crude style in which most of them are written. It can't be any worse than the stilted and artificial style in which your school reader is written; and, anyhow, if you are ever going to be a writer, style is a thing which you laboriously must learn, and then having acquired added wisdom you will forget part of it and chuck the rest of it out of the window and acquire a style of your own, which merely is another way of saying that if you have good taste to start with you will have what is called style in writing, and if you haven't that sense of good taste you won't have a style and nothing can give it to you.

"Read them for the thrills that are in them. Read them, remembering that if this country had not had a pioneer breed of Buckskin Sams and Deadwood Dicks we should have had no native school of dime novelists. Read them for their brisk and stirring movement; for the

spirit of outdoor adventure and life which crowds them; for their swift but logical processions of sequences; for the phases of pioneer Americanism they rawly but graphically portray, and for their moral values. Read them along with your Coopers and your Ivanhoe and your Mayne Reids. Read them through, and perhaps some day, if fortune is kinder to you than ever it was to your father, with a background behind you and a vision before you, you may be inspired to sit down and write a dime novel of your own almost good enough to be worthy of mention in the same breath with the two greatest adventure stories—dollar-sized dime novels is what they really are—that ever were written; written, both of them, by sure-enough writing men, who, I'm sure, must have based their moods and their modes upon the memories of the dime novels which they, they in their turn, read when they were boys of your age.

"I refer, my son, to a book called Huckleberry Finn, and to a book called Treasure Island."

V

ONE THIRD OFF

V

ONE THIRD OFF

I: EXTRA! EXTRA! ALL ABOUT THE GREAT REDUCTION

THE way I look at this thing is this way: If something happens to you and by writing about it you can make a bit of money and at the same time be a benefactor to the race, then why not? Does not the philanthropic aspect of the proposition more than balance off the mercenary side? I hold that it does, or at least that it should, in the estimation of all fair-minded persons. It is to this class that I particularly address myself. Unfair-minded persons are advised to take warning and stop right here with the contemporary paragraph. That which follows in this little volume is not for them.

An even stronger motive impels me. In hereinafter setting forth at length and in detail the steps taken by me in making myself thin, or, let us say, thinner, I am patterning after the tasteful and benevolent examples of some

of the most illustrious ex-fat men of letters in our country. Take Samuel G. Blythe now. Mr. Blythe is the present international bantweight champion. There was a time, though, when he was what the world is pleased to call over-sized. In writing on several occasions, and always entertainingly and helpfully, upon the subject of the methods employed by him to reduce himself to his current proportions I hold that he had the right idea about it.

Getting fat is a fault; except when caused by the disease known as obesity, it is a bad habit. Getting thin and at the same time retaining one's health is a virtue. Never does the reductionist feel quite so virtuous as when for the first time, perhaps in decades, he can stand straight up and look straight down and behold the tips of his toes. His virtue is all the more pleasant to him because it recalls a reformation on his part and because it has called for self-denial. I started to say that it had called for mortification of the flesh, but I shan't. Despite the contrary opinions of the early fathers of the church, I hold that the mortification of the flesh is really based upon the flesh itself, where there is too much of it for beauty and grace, not merely upon the process employed in getting rid of it.

Ask any fat man—or better still, any formerly fat man—if I am not correct. But do not ask a fat woman unless, as in the case of possible fire at a theatre, you already have

looked about you and chosen the nearest exit. Taken as a sex, women are more likely to be touchy upon this detail where it applies to themselves than men are.

I have a notion that probably the late Lucrezia Borgia did not start feeding her house guests on those deep-dish poison pies with which her name historically is associated until after she grew sensitive about the way folks dropping in at the Borgia home for a visit were sizing up her proportions on the bias, so to speak. And I attribute the development of the less pleasant side of Cleopatra's disposition—keeping asps around the house and stabbing the bearers of unpleasant tidings with daggers and feeding people to the crocodiles and all that sort of thing—to the period when she found her anklets binding uncomfortably and along toward half past ten o'clock of an evening was seized by a well-nigh uncontrollable longing to excuse herself from the company and run upstairs and take off her jeweled stomacher and things and slip into something loose.

But upon this subject men are less inclined to be fussy, and by the same token more inclined, on having accomplished a cure, to take a justifiable pride in it and to brag publicly about it. As I stated a moment ago, I claim Mr. Blythe viewed the matter in a proper and commendable light when he took pen in hand to describe more or less at length his reduction processes. So, too, did that other notable of

the literary world, Mr. Vance Thompson. Mr. Thompson would be the last one to deny that once upon a time he undeniably was large. The first time I ever saw him—it was in Paris some years ago, and he was walking away from me and had his back to me and was wearing a box coat—I thought for a moment they were taking a tractor across town. All that, however, belongs to the past. Just so soon as Mr. Thompson had worked out a system of dieting and by personal application had proved its success he wrote the volume Eat and Grow Thin, embodying therein his experiences, his course of treatment and his advice to former fellow sufferers. So you see in saying now what I mean to say I do but follow in the mouth-prints of the famous.

Besides, when I got fat I capitalized my fatness in the printed word. I told how it felt to be fat.

I described how natural it was for a fat man to feel like the Grand Cañon before dinner and like the Royal Gorge afterwards.

I told how, if he wedged himself into a telephone booth and said, "64 Broad," persons overhearing him were not sure whether he was asking Central for a number or telling a tailor what his waist measurements were.

I told how deeply it distressed him as he walked along, larding the earth as he passed, to hear bystanders making ribald comments about the inadvisability of trying to move

bank vaults through the streets in the daytime. And now that, after fifteen years of fatness, I am getting thin again—glory be!—wherein, I ask, is the impropriety in furnishing the particulars for publication; the more especially since my own tale, I fondly trust, may make helpful telling for some of my fellow creatures? When you can offer a boon to humanity and at the same time be paid for it the dual advantage is not to be decried.

II: THOSE ROMPING ELFIN TWENTIES

It has been my personal observation, viewing the matter at close range, that nearly always fat, like old age or a thief in the dark, steals upon one unawares. I take my own case. As a youngster and on through my teens and into my early twenties—ah, those romping elfin twenties!—I was, in outline, what might be termed spindly, not to say slimmish. Those who have known me in my latter years might be loath to believe it, but one of my boyhood nick-names—I had several, and none of them was complimentary but all of them were graphic—was Bonesy. At sixteen, by stripping myself in alternate whites and blacks, I could have hired out for a surveyor's rod. At twenty-one I measured six feet the long way, and if only mine had been a hook nose I should have cast a shadow like a shepherd's crook.

My avocation in life was such as to induce slenderness. I was the city staff of a small-

town daily paper, and what with dodging round gathering up items about people to write for the paper and then dodging round to avoid personal contact with the people I had written the items about for the paper, I was kept pretty constantly upon the go. In our part of the country in those days the leading citizens were prone to take offense at some of the things that were said of them in the public prints and given to expressing their sense of annoyance forcibly. When a high-spirited Southern gentleman, regarding whom something of a disagreeable nature had appeared in the news columns, entered the editorial sanctum without knocking, wearing upon his crimsoned face an expression of forthright irritation and with his right hand stealing back under his coat skirt, it was time for the offending reporter to emulate the common example of the native white-throated nuthatch and either flit thence rapidly or hunt a hole.

Since prohibition came in and a hiccup became a mark of affluence instead of a social error, as formerly, and a loaded flank is a sign of hospitality rather than of menace, things may have changed. I am speaking, though, of the damper early nineties in Kentucky, when a sudden motion toward the right hip pocket was a threat and not a promise, as at present. So, what with first one thing and then another, now collecting the news of the community and now avoiding the customary consequences, I did a

good deal of running about hither and yon, and kept fit and spry and stripling-thin.

Yet I ate heartily of all things that appealed to my palate, eating at least two kinds of hot bread at every meal—down South we say it with flours—and using chewing tobacco for the salad course, as was the custom. I ate copiously at and between meals and gained not a whit.

III: REGARDING LIVER-EATING WATKINS AND OTHERS

It was after I had moved to New York and had taken a desk job that I detected myself in the act, as it were, of plumping out. Cognizant of the fact, as I was, I nevertheless took no curative or corrective measures in the way of revising my diet. I was content to make excuses inwardly. I said to myself that I came of a breed whose members in their mature years were inclined to broaden noticeably. I said to myself that I was not getting the amount of exercise that once I had; that my occupation was now more sedentary, and therefore it stood to reason that I should take on a little flesh here and there over my frame. Moreover, I felt good. If I had felt any better I could have charged admission. My appetite was perfect, my digestion magnificent, nay, awe-inspiring.

To me it seemed that physically I was just as active and agile as I had been in those 'prentice years of my professional career when the ability to shift quickly from place to place

and to think with an ornithological aptitude were conducive to a continuance of unimpaired health among young reporters. Anyhow—thus I to myself in the same strain, continuing—anyhow, I was not actually getting fat. Nothing so gross as that. I merely was attaining to a pleasant, a becoming and a dignified fullness of contour as I neared my thirtieth birthday. So why worry about what was natural and normal among persons of my temperament, and having my hereditary impulses, upon attaining a given age?

I am convinced that men who are getting fat are generally like that. For every added pound an added excuse, for each multiplying inch at the waistline a new plea in abatement to be set up in the mind. I see the truth of it now. When you start getting fat you start getting fatuous. With the indubitable proof of his infirmity mounting in superimposed folds of tissues before his very gaze, with the rounded evidence presented right there in front of him where he can rest his elbows on it, your average fattish man nevertheless refuses to acknowledge the visible situation. Vanity blinds his one eye, love of self-indulgence blinds the other. Observe now how I speak in the high moral tone of a reformed offender, which is the way of reformed offenders and other reformers the world over. We are always most virtuous in retrospect, as the fact of the crime recedes. Moreover, he who has not erred has but little to gloat over.

There are two sorts of evidence upon which many judges look askance—that sort of evidence which is circumstantial and that sort which purely is hearsay. In this connection, and departing for the space of a paragraph or so from the main theme, I am reminded of the incident through which a certain picturesque gentleman of the early days in California acquired a name which he was destined to wear forever after, and under which his memory is still affectionately encysted in the traditions of our great Far West. I refer to the late Liver-Eating Watkins. Mr. Watkins entered into active life and passed through a good part of it bearing the unilluminative and commonplace first name of Elmer or Lemuel, or perhaps it was Jasper. Just which one of these or some other I forget now, but no matter; at least it was some such. One evening a low-down terra-cotta-colored Piute swiped two of Mr. Watkins' paint ponies and by stealth, under cover of the cloaking twilight, went away with them into the far mysterious spaces of the purpling sage.

To these ponies the owner was deeply attached, not alone on account of the intrinsic value, but for sentimental reasons likewise. So immediately on discovering the loss the next morning, Mr. Watkins took steps. He saddled a third pony which the thief had somehow overlooked in the haste of departure, and he girded on him both cutlery and shootlery, and he mounted and soon was off and away across

the desert upon the trail of the vanished malefactor. Now when Mr. Watkins fared forth thus accoutered it was a sign he was not out for his health or anybody else's.

Friends and well-wishers volunteered to accompany him upon the chase, for they foresaw brisk doings. But he declined their company. Folklore, descending from his generation to ours, has it that he said this was his own business and he preferred handling it alone in his own way. He did add, however, that on overtaking the fugitive it was his intention, as an earnest or token of his displeasure, to eat that Injun's liver raw. Some versions say he mentioned liver rare, but the commonly accepted legend has it that the word used was *raw*. With this he put the spur to his steed's flank and was soon but a moving speck in the distance.

Now there was never offered any direct proof that our hero, in pursuance of his plan for teaching the Indian a lesson, actually did do with regard to the latter's liver what he had promised the bystanders he would do; moreover, touching on this detail he ever thereafter maintained a steadfast and unbreakable silence. In lieu of corroborative testimony by unbiased witnesses as to the act itself, we have only these two things to judge by: First, that when Mr. Watkins returned in the dusk of the same day he was wearing upon his face a well-fed, not to say satiated, expression, yet had started

forth that morning with no store of provisions; and second, that on being found in a deceased state some days later, the Piute, who when last previously seen had with him two of Mr. Watkins' pintos and one liver of his own, was now shy all three. By these facts a strong presumptive case having been made out, Mr. Watkins was thenceforth known not as Ezekiel or Emanuel, or whatever his original first name had been, but as Liver-Eating, or among friends by the affectionate diminutive of Liv for short.

This I would regard as a typical instance of the value of a chain of good circumstantial evidence, with no essential link lacking. Direct testimony could hardly have been more satisfactory, all things considered; and yet direct testimony is the best sort there is, in the law courts and out. On the other hand, hearsay evidence is viewed legally and often by the layman with suspicion; in most causes of action being barred out altogether. Nevertheless, it is a phase of the fattish man's perversity that, rejecting the direct, the circumstantial and the circumferential testimony which abounds about him, he too often awaits confirmation of his growing suspicions at the hands of outsiders and bystanders before he is willing openly to admit that condition of fatness which for long has been patent to the most casual observer.

Women, as I have observed them, are even more disposed to avoid confession on this point. A woman somehow figures that so long as she

refuses to acknowledge to herself or any other interested party that she has progressed out of the ranks of the plumpened into the congested and overflowing realms of the avowedly obese, why, for just so long may she keep the rest of the world in ignorance too. I take it, the ostrich which first set the example to all the other ostriches of trying to avoid detection by the enemy through the simple expedient of sticking its head in the sand was a lady ostrich, and moreover one typical of her sex. But men are bad enough. I know that I was.

IV: I BECOME THE PANTING CHAMPION

Month after month, through the cycle of the revolving seasons, I went along deceiving myself, even though I deceived none else, coining new pleas in extenuation or outright contradictions to meet each new-arising element of confirmatory proof to a state of case which no unprejudiced person could fail to acknowledge. The original discoverer of the alibi was a fat man; indeed, it was named for him—Ali Bi-Ben Adhem, he was a friend and companion of the Prophet, and so large that, going into Mecca, he had to ride on two camels. This fact is historically authenticated. I looked it up.

In the fall of the year, when I brought last winter's heavy suit out of the clothes-press and found it now to hug o'ersnugly for comfort, I cajoled my saner self into accepting a most transparent lie—my figure had not materially

altered through the intervening spring and summer; it was only that the garments, being fashioned of a shoddy material, had shrunk. I owned a dress suit which had been form fitting, 'tis true, but none too close a fit upon me. I had owned it for years; I looked forward to owning and using it for years to come. I laid it aside for a period during an abatement in formal social activities; then bringing it forth from its camphor-ball nest for a special occasion I found I could scarce force my way down into the trousers, and that the waistcoat buttons could not be made to meet the buttonholes, and that the coat, after finally I had struggled into it, bound me as with chains by reason of the pull at armpits and between the shoulders. I could not get my arms down to my sides at all. I could only use them flapper fashion.

I felt like a penguin. I imagine I looked a good bit like one too.

But I did not blame myself, who was the real criminal, or the grocer, who was accessory before the fact. I put the fault on the tailor, who was innocent. Each time I had to let my belt buckle out for another notch in order that I might breathe I diagnosed the trouble as a touch of what might be called Harlem flatulency. We lived in a flat then—a nonelevator flat—and I pretended that climbing three flights of steep stairs was what developed my abdominal muscles and at the same time made me short of wind.

I coined a new excuse after we had moved to a suburb back of Yonkers. Frequently I had to run to catch the 5:07 accommodation, because if I missed it I might have to wait for the 7:05, which was no accommodation. I would go jamming my way at top speed toward the train gate and on into the train shed, and when I reached my car I would be 'scaping so emphatically that the locomotive on up ahead would grow jealous and probably felt as though it might just as well give up trying to compete in volume of sound output with a real contender. But I was agile enough for all purposes and as brisk as any upon my feet. Therein I found my consolation.

Among all my fellow members of the younger Grand Central Station set there was scarce a one who could start with me at scratch and beat me to a train just pulling out of the shed; and even though he might have bested me at sprinting, I had him whipped to a soufflé at panting. In a hundred-yard dash I could spot anyone of my juniors a dozen pairs of pants and win out handily. I was the acknowledged all-weights panting champion of the Putnam Division.

If there had been ten or twelve of my neighbors as good at this as I was we might have organized and drilled together and worked out a class cheer for the Putnam Division Country Club—three deep long pants, say, followed by nine sharp short pants or pantlets. But I

would have been elected pants leader without a struggle. My merits were too self-evident for a contest.

But did I attribute my supremacy in this regard to accumulating and thickening layers of tissue in the general vicinity of my midriff? I did not! No, sir, because I was fat—indubitably, uncontrovertibly and beyond the peradventure of a doubt, fat—I kept on playing the fat man's game of mental solitaire. I inwardly insisted, and I think partly believed, that my lung power was too great for the capacity of my throat opening, hence pants. I cast a pitying eye at other men, deep of girth and purple of face, waddling down the platform, and as I scudded on past them I would say to myself that after all there was a tremendous difference between being obese and being merely well fleshed out. The real reason of course was that my legs had remained reasonably firm and trim while the torso was inflating. For I was one who got fat not all over at once but in favored localities. And I was even as the husband is whose wife is being gossiped about —the last person in the neighborhood to hear the news.

As though it were yesterday I remember the day and the place and the attendant circumstances when and where awakening was forced upon me. Two of us went to Canada on a hunting trip. The last lap of the journey into camp called for a fifteen-mile horseback ride

through the woods. The native who was to be our chief guide met us with our mounts at a way station far up in the interior of Quebec. He knew my friend—had guided him for two seasons before; but I was a stranger in those parts. Now until that hour it had never occurred to me that I was anywhere nearly so bulksome as this friend of mine was. For he indubitably was a person of vast displacement and augmented gross total tonnage; and in that state of blindness which denies us the gift to see ourselves as others see us I never had reckoned myself to be in his class, avoirdupoisfully speaking. But as we lined up two abreast alongside the station, with our camp duffel piled about us, the keen-eyed guide, standing slightly to one side, considered our abdominal profiles, and the look he cast at my companion after looking at me said as plainly as words, "Well, I see you've brought a spare set along with you in case of a puncture."

But he did not come right out and say a thing so utterly tactless. What he did say, in a worried tone, was that he was sorry now he had not fetched along a much more powerful horse for me to ride on. He had a good big chunky work animal, not fast but very strong in the back, he said, which would have answered my purposes first rate.

I experienced another disillusioning jolt. Could it be that this practiced woodsman's eye actually appraised me as being as heavy as

my mate, or even heavier? Surely he must be wrong in his judgments. The point was that I woefully was wrong in mine. How true it is that we who would pluck the mote from behind a fellow being's waistcoat so rarely take note of the beam which we have swallowed crosswise!

Even so, a great light was beginning to percolate to my innermost consciousness. A grave doubt pestered me through our days of camping there in the autumnal wilderness. When we had emerged from the woods and had reached Montreal on the homeward trip I enticed my friend upon a penny-in-the-slot weighing machine in the Montreal station and I observed what he weighed; and then when he stepped aside I unostentatiously weighed myself, and in the box score credited myself with a profound shock; also with an error, which should have been entered up a long time before that.

Approximately, we were of the same height and in bone structure not greatly unlike. I had figured that daily tramping after game should have taken a few folds of superfluous flesh off my frame, and so, no doubt, it had done. Yet I had pulled the spindle around the face of the dial to a point which recorded for me a total of sixteen pounds and odd ounces more than his penny had registered for him.

If he was fat, unmistakably and conclusively fat—and he was—what then was I? In Troy weight—Troy where the hay scales come from

—the answer was written. I was fat as fat, or else the machine had lied. And as between me and that machine I could pick the liar at the first pick.

V: ON ACQUIRING SOME SNAPPY PORES

That night on the sleeper a splendid resolution sprouted within me. Next morning when we arrived home it was ready and ripe for plucking. I would trim myself down to more lithesome proportions and I would start the job right away. It did not occur to me that cutting down my daily consumption of provender might prove helpful to the success of the proposed undertaking. Or if it did occur to me I put the idea sternly from me, for I was by way of being a robust trencherman. I had joyed in the pleasures of the table, and I had written copiously of those joys, and I now declined to recant of my faith or to abate my indulgences.

All this talk which I had heard about balanced rations went in at one ear and out at the other. I knew what a balanced ration was. I stowed one aboard three times daily—at morn, again at noon and once more at nightfall. A balanced ration was one which, being eaten, did not pull you over on your face; it was one which you could poise properly if only you leaned well back, upon arising from the table, and placed the two hands, with a gentle lifting motion, just under the overhang of the main cargo hold.

Surely there must be some way of achiev-

ing the desired result other than by following dieting devices. There was—exercising was the answer. I would exercise and so become a veritable faun.

Now, so far as I recalled, I had never taken any indoor exercise excepting once in a while to knock on wood. I abhorred the thought of ritualistic bedroom calisthenics such as were recommended by divers health experts. Climbing out of a warm bed and standing out in the middle of a cold room and giving an imitation of a demoniac semaphore had never appealed to me as a fascinating divertisement for a grown man. As I think I may have remarked once before, lying at full length on one's back on the floor immediately upon awakening of a morning and raising the legs to full length twenty times struck me as a performance lacking in dignity and utterly futile.

Besides, what sort of a way was that to greet the dewy morn?

So as an alternative I decided to enroll for membership at a gymnasium where I could have company at my exercising and make a sport of what otherwise would be in the nature of a punishment. This I did. With a group of fellow inmates for my team mates, I tossed the medicine ball about. My score at this was perfect; that is to say, sometimes when it came my turn to catch I missed the ball, but the ball never once missed me. Always it landed on some tender portion of my anatomy, so that

my average, written in black-and-blue spots, remained an even 1000.

Daily I cantered around and around and around a running track until my breathing was such probably as to cause people passing the building to think that the West Side Y. M. C. A. was harboring a pet porpoise inside. Once, doing this, I caught a glimpse of my own form in a looking-glass which for some reason was affixed to one of the pillars flanking the oval. A looking-glass properly did not belong there; distinctly it was out of place and could serve no worthy purpose. Very few of the sights presented in a gym which largely is patronized by city-bred fat men are deserving to be mirrored in a glass. They are not such visions as one would care to store in fond memory's album. Be that as it may, here was this mirror, and swinging down the course suddenly I beheld myself in it. Clad in a chastely simple one-piece garment, with my face all a blistered crimson and my fingers interlaced together about where the third button of the waistcoat, counting from the bottom up, would have been had I been wearing any waistcoat, I reminded myself of a badly scorched citizen escaping in a scantily dressed condition from a burning homestead bringing with him the chief family treasure clasped in his arms. He had saved the pianola!

From the running track or the medicine-ball court I would repair to the steam room and

simmer pleasantly in a temperature of 240 degrees Fahrenheit—I am sure I have the figures right—until all I needed before being served was to have the gravy slightly thickened with flour and a dash of water cress added here and there. Having remained in the steam cabinet until quite done, I next would jump into the swimming pool, which concluded the afternoon's entertainment.

Jumping into the cool water of the pool was supposed to reseal the pores which the treatment in the hot room had caused to open. In the best gymnasium circles it is held to be a fine thing to have these educated pores, but I am sure it can be overdone, and personally I cannot say that I particularly enjoyed it. I kept it up largely for their sake. They became highly trained, but developed temperament. They were apt to get the signals mixed and open unexpectedly on the street, resulting in bad colds for me.

For six weeks, on every week day from three to five P.M. I maintained this schedule religiously—at least I used a good many religious words while so engaged—and then I went on the scales to find out what progress I had made toward attaining the desired result. I had kept off the scales until then because I was saving up, as it were, to give myself a nice jolly surprise party.

So I weighed. And I had picked up nine pounds and a half! That was what I had

gained for all my sufferings and all my exertions—that, along with a set of snappy but emotional pores and a personal knowledge of how a New England boiled dinner feels just before it comes on the table.

"This," I said bitterly to myself—"this is sheer foolhardiness! Keep this up for six weeks more and I'll find myself fallen away to a perfect three-ton truck. Keep it up for three months and I'll be ready to rent myself out to the aquarium as a suitable playmate for the leviathan in the main tank. I shall stop this idiocy before it begins making me seasick merely to look down at myself as I walk. I may slosh about and billow somewhat, but I positively decline to heave up and down. I refuse to be known as the human tidal wave, with women and children being hurriedly removed to a place of safety at my approach. Right here and now is where I quit qualifying for the inundation stakes!"

Which accordingly I did. What I did not realize was that the unwonted exercise gave me such a magnificent appetite that, after a session at the gymnasium, I ate about three times as much as I usually did at dinner—and, mark you, I never had been one with the appetite, as the saying goes, of a bird, to peck at some Hartz Mountain roller's prepared food and wipe the stray rape seed off my nose on a cuttle-fish bone and then fly up on the perch and tuck the head under the wing and

call it a meal. I had ever been what might be termed a sincere feeder. So, never associating the question of diet with the problem of attaining physical slightness, I swung back again into my old mode of life with the resigned conviction that since destiny had chosen me to be fat there was nothing for me to do in the premises excepting to go right on to the end of my mortal chapter being fat, fatter and perhaps fattest. I'd just make the best of it.

And I'd use care about crossing a country bridge at any gait faster than a walk.

Now this continued for years and years, and then here a few months ago something else happened. And on top of that something else—to wit: The Great Reduction.

Of the Great Reduction more anon.

VI: MORE ANON

Well, I made up my mind, having tried violent exercise in the gymnasium, coupled with violent language in the steam room, and having found neither or both had been of the least avail in trimming down my proportions, but on the contrary had augmented them to the extent of nearly ten pounds, live weight, that I would let well enough alone. If 'twere my ordained fate to be fat—why, then so be it; I'd be fatly fatalistic and go on through life undulating and rippling. If an all-wise Providence meant to call me to the estate of being the bulkiest writing man using the English language for a

vehicle, then let Hilaire Belloc look to his laurels and Gilbert K. Chesterton to his unholsterings. There was one consolation: Thank heavens the championship would remain in America!

The years go marching by in ordered processional. A great war bursts and for a space endures. In our own land prohibition is nationally enacted and women's suffrage comes to be, and Irving Berlin, reading the signs of the times, decides to write The Blue Laws Blues. Fashions of thought change; other fashions, also. A girl who was born without hips or eyebrows and who in childhood was regarded as a freak, now finds herself, at the age of eighteen, exactly in the mode, thus proving that all things come to those who wait. Czecho-Slovakia is discovered. The American forces spent three days taking Château-Thierry and three years trying to learn to pronounce it. Ireland undertakes to settle her ancient problem on the basis of self-extermination. Several rich retail profiteers die, the approval being hearty and general, and on arriving at heaven experience great difficulty in passing through the Needle's Eye, or tradesmen's entrance. Somebody tells Henry Ford about what some high priests did in Jerusalem nearly two thousand years ago and in the first flush of his startled indignation he becomes violently anti-Semitic. General Pershing returns from the battlefields of Europe universally acclaimed a

model of military efficiency and wearing so many medals that alongside him John Philip Sousa, by contrast, looks absolutely nude. His friends project him into the political arena and the result is summed in a phrase—"Lafayette, he ain't there!" Unavailing efforts are made by a rebellious and unreconciled few of us to find a presidential candidate willing to run on a platform of but four planks, namely: Wines, ales, liquors and cigars. Harding wins, Scattering second; Cox also ran: slogan: "He Kept Us Out of McAdoo." Manhattan Island, from whence the rest of the country derives its panics, its jazz tremblors and its girl shows, develops a severe sinking sensation in the pit of its financial stomach, accompanied by acute darting pains at the juncture of Broad and Wall. This is the way Thomas Carlyle used to start off a new chapter, and I like it. It denotes erudition. Ziegfeld builds a new Follies show around twelve pairs of winsome knee joints. North Dakota blows down the Nonpartisan League and discovers that darned thing was loaded in both barrels. The Prussians are pained to note that for some reason or other a number of people seem to harbor a grudge against them. Nine thousand Kentucky mint patchers are plowed under and the sites sown with rosemary; that's for remembrance. In New York plans are undertaken for construing the Eighteenth Amendment along the lines of the selective draft, upon the theory that booze

is a bad thing for some people and much too good for many of the others. The word "intrigued" creeps into our language and becomes common property, but the fiction writers saw it first. A business men's cabinet, composed almost exclusively of politicians succeeds a business men's cabinet composed almost exclusively of politicians. In order to hurry along the payment of Installment One of the Indemnity France whistles up the reserves and that chore is chored. Pessimists, including many of the old-line Democrats, practically all the maltsters, and Aunt Emma Goldman, are filled with a dismal conviction that creation has gone plum' to perdition in a hand basket. Those more optimistically inclined look upon the brighter side of things and distill consolation from the thought that nothing is so bad but what it might have been worse—Trotzky might have been born twins. Great Britain has her post-war industrial crisis, Serial Number 24. The Sinn Féin enlarges the British national anthem to read God Save the King Till We Can Get at Him! By a strict party vote Congress decides the share in the victory achieved by the A. E. F. was overwhelmingly Republican, but that the airship program went heavily Democratic. Popular distrust of home-brew recipes assumes a nation-wide phase. This brings us up to the early spring of this year of grace, 1921, which is what I have been aiming for all through this paragraph.

Quite without warning, I discovered along about the first of March that something ailed me; something was rocking the boat. About my heart there was a sense of pressure, so it seemed to me, or else my imagination was at fault. Mentally, I found myself—well, for lack of a better word to express it—logy. Otherwise, in all physical regards, I felt as brisk and peart as ever I have, despite the circumstance of having reached the age when a great many of us are confronted by the distressing discovery that we are rapidly getting no younger.

Now when a man who has always enjoyed such outrageously perfect health as it has been my good fortune to enjoy takes note that certain nagging manifestations are persisting within him it is his duty, or at least it should be his duty, to try to find out the underlying cause of whatever it is that distresses him and correct the trouble before it becomes chronic.

I did not get frightened—I trust I am not a self-alarmist—but I did get worried. I made up my mind that I would not wait, as those who approach middle age so often do, for the medical examiner of an insurance company to scare me into sudden conniption fits. But I also made up my mind that I would find out what radically was wrong with me, if anything, and endeavor to master it while the mastering was good.

This, though, was after I had harked back

to the days of my adolescence. I was born down on the northern edge of the southern range of the North American malaria belt; and when I was growing up, if one seemed intellectually torpid or became filled with an overpowering bodily languor, the indisposition always was diagnosed offhand as a touch of malaria. Accordingly, the victim, taking his own advice or another's, jolted his liver with calomel until the poor thing flinched every time a strange pill was seen approaching it, and then he rounded out the course of treatment with all the quinine the traffic would stand. Recalling these early campaigns, I borrowed of their strategy for use against my present symptoms—if symptoms they were. I took quinine until my ears rang so that persons passing me on the public highway would halt to listen to the chimes. My head was filled with myterious muffled rumblings.

VII: OFFICE VISITS, $10

It required all of two weeks of experimenting with my interior to convince me that whatever it might be that annoyed me, it surely was not a thing which an intensive bombardment of the liver would cure. The liver has a low visibility but is easy to hit.

I had the aversion to seeking professional guidance for the curing of a presumably minor disorder that most robust male adults have. In personal tribute I may add that I have never

been hypochondriac in any possible respect. However, toward the end of those three weeks I formed the decision that I would go to see a doctor or so. But I would sneak up on these gentlemen, so to speak. I would call upon them in the rôle of a friend rather than avowedly as a prospective patient, and take them into my confidence, as it were, by degrees. Somewhere in the back part of my brain I nursed a persistent fear that my complaints might be diagnosed as symptoms of that incurable malady known as being forty-four years old, going on forty-five. And I knew that much already without paying a physician twenty-five dollars for telling me so the first time and ten dollars for each time he told it to me over again.

Rather shamefacedly, with a well-simulated air of casualness, I dropped in upon a physician who is a friend of mine and in whose judgment I have confidence; and then, after a two-day interval, I went to see a second physician of my acquaintance who, I believe, also thoroughly knows his trade. With both men I followed the same tactics—roundabout chatting on the topic of this or that, and finally an honest confession as to the real purpose of my visit. In both instances the results were practically identical. Each man manifested an almost morbid curiosity touching on my personal habits and bodily idiosyncrasies. Each asked me a lot of questions. Each went at me with X-ray machines and blood tests and chemical

analysissies—if there isn't any such word I claim there should be—until my being was practically an open book to him and I had no secrets left at all.

And the upshot of all this was that each of them told me that though organically I was as sound as a nut—in fact much sounder than some of the nuts they knew professionally—I was carrying an overload of avoirdupois about with me. In other words, I was too fat for my own good. I was eating too much sweet stuff and entirely too much starch—especially starch. They agreed on this point emphatically. As well as I could gather, I was subjecting my interior to that highly shellacked gloss which is peculiar to the bosom of the old-fashioned full-dress or burying shirt upon its return from the steam laundry, when what my system really called for was the dull domestic finish.

"Well, doc," I said upon hearing this for the second time in language which already had a familiar sound—"well, all that you say being true, what then?"

"For one thing, more exercise."

"But I take plenty of exercise now."

"For example, what?"

"For example, golf."

"How often do you play golf?"

"Well, not so very often, as the real golf-bug or caddie's worm would measure the thing—say, on an average of once a week in the golfing season. But I take so many swings at

the ball before hitting it that I figure I get more exercise out of the game than do those who play oftener but take only about one wallop at the pill in driving off. And when I drive into the deep grass, as is my wont, my work with the niblick would make you think of somebody bailing out a sinking boat. My bunker exercises are frequently what you might call violent. And in the fall of the year I do a lot of tramping about in the woods with a gun. I might add that on a hunting trip I can walk many a skinny person into a state of total exhaustion." I stated this last pridefully.

"All right for that, then," he said. "We'll concede that you get an abundance of exercise. Then there is another thing you should do, and of the two this is by far the more essential —you should go on a diet."

Right there I turned mentally rebellious. I wanted to reduce my bulk, but I did not want to reduce my provender. I offered counter-arguments in defense. I pointed out that for perhaps five years past my weight practically had been stationary. Also I called attention to the fact that I no longer ate so heavily as once I had. Not that I wished actually to decry my appetite. It had been a good friend to me and not for worlds would I slander it. I have a sincere conviction that age cannot wither nor custom stale my infinite gastric juices. Never, I trust, will there come a time when I shan't relish my victuals or when I'll

feel disinclined to chase the last fugitive bite around and around the plate until I overtake it. But I presented the claim, which was quite true, that I was not the consumer, measured by volume, I once had been. Perhaps my freighterage spaces, with passing years, had grown less expansive or less accommodating or something.

Likewise, I invited his consideration of the fact, which was not to be gainsaid either, that many men very much less elaborated than I in girth customarily ate very much more than I did. I recalled, offhand, sundry conspicuous examples of this sort. I believe I mentioned one or two such. For instance, now, there was Mr. William Jennings Bryan. The Bryan appetite, as I remarked to the doctor, is one of the chief landmarks of Mr. Bryan's home city of Lincoln, Nebraska. They take the sight-seeing tourists around to have a look at it, the first thing.

To observe Mr. Bryan breakfasting on the morning when a national Democratic convention is in session is a sight worth seeing. A double order of cantaloupes on the half shell, a crock full of oatmeal, a rosary of sausages, and about as many flapjacks as would be required to tessellate the floor of a fair-sized reception hall is nothing at all for him. And when he has concluded his meal he gets briskly up and strolls around to the convention hall and makes a better speech and a longer one and

a louder one than anybody. Naturally, time, the insatiable remodeller, has worked some outward changes in Mr. Bryan since the brave old days of the cross of gold. His hair, chafed by the constant pressure of the halo, has retreated up and ever up his scalp until the forehead extends clear over and down upon the sunset slope. The little fine wrinkles are thickly smocked at the corners of the eagle eyes that flashed so fiercely at the cringing plutocrats.

But his bearing is just as graceful and his voice just as silvery and as strong as when in '96 he advocated free silver to save the race, or when he advocated anti-expansion in the Philippines, or government ownership of the railroads, or a policy of nonpreparedness for war when Germany first began acting up—Grover Cleveland Bergdoll felt the same way about it and so did Ma Bergdoll;—and I, for one, have no doubt that Mr. Bryan will be just as supple, mentally and physically, next campaign year when, if he runs true to form, he will be advocating yet another of that series of those immemorial Jeffersonian principles of the fathers, which he thinks up, to order, right out of his own head, when a campaign impends. Mr. Bryan knows how to play the political game—none better; but he certainly does have a large discard. That, however, is aside from the main issue.

The point I sought to bring out there in

the office of my friend Doctor So-and-so was that Mr. Bryan, to my knowledge, ate what he craved, and all that he craved, yet did not become obese. When the occasion demanded he could be amply bellicose, but the accent was not upon the first two syllables.

I cited similar cases further to buttress my position. I told him that almost the skinniest human being I ever knew had been one of the largest eaters. I was speaking now of John Wesley Bass, the champion raw-egg eater of Massac Precinct, whose triumphant career knew not pause or discomfiture until one day at the McCracken County fair when suddenly tragedy dire impended.

He did not overextend himself in the gustatory line—that to one of John Wesley Bass' natural gifts and attainments wellnigh would have been impossible; but he betrayed a lack of caution when, having broken his former record by eating thirty-six raw eggs at a sitting, he climbed upon a steam merry-go-round, shortly thereafter falling off the spotted wooden giraffe which he rode, and being removed to the city hospital in an unconscious condition.

That night later when the crisis had passed the doctors said that as nearly as they could figure out a case so unusual, Mr. Bass had had a very close call from being just naturally scrambled to death. I spoke at length of my former fellow townsman's powers, dwelling heavily upon the fact that, despite all, he never

thickened up at the waistline. Throughout the narrative, however, the doctor punctuated my periods with derisive snorts which were disconcerting to an orderly presentation of the facts. Nevertheless, I continued until I had reached what I regarded as a telling climax.

"Piffle!" he rejoined. "One hoarse raucous piffle and three sharp decisive piffs for your arguments! I tell you that what ails you is this: You are now registering the preliminary warnings of obesity. The danger is not actually here yet; but for you Nature already has set the danger signals. There's a red light on the switch for one I. Cobb. You are due before a great while for a head-end collision with your own health. You can take my advice or you can let it alone. That's entirely up to you. Only don't blame me if you come back here some day all telescoped up amidships.

"And please don't consume time which is reasonably valuable to me, however lightly you may regard it, by telling me now about slim men who eat more than you do and yet keep their figures. The woods are full of them; also the owl wagons. The difference between such men as those you have described and such men as you is that they were made to be thin men and to keep on being thin men regardless of their food consumption, and that your sort are naturally predisposed to fatness. You can't judge their cases by yours any more than you can judge the blood-sweating behemoth of

Holy Writ by the plans and specifications of the humble earwig.

"One man's meat is another man's poison; that's a true saying. And here's another saying—one cannot eat his cake and have it, too. But that's an error so far as you are concerned. The trouble with you is that when you eat your cake you still have it—in layers of fat. If you want to get rid of the layers you'll have to cut out the cake, or most of it, anyway. Must I make you a diagram, or is this plain enough for your understanding?"

It was—abundantly. But I still had one more bright little idea waiting in the second-line trenches. I called up the reserves.

"Ahem!" I said. "Well now, old man, how about trying some of these electrical treatments or these chemicalized baths or these remedies I see advertised? I was reading only the other day where one successful operator promised on his word of honor to take off flesh for anybody, no matter who it was, without interfering with that person's table habits and customs."

My friend can be very plain-spoken when the spirit moves him.

"Say, listen to me," he snapped, "or better still, you'd better write down what I'm about to say and stick it in your hat where you can find it and consult it when your mind begins wandering again. Those special mechanical devices to reduce fat people are contrived for the benefit of men and lazy women who are too slothful

to take exercise or else too besotted in the matter of food indulgence to face the alternative of dieting. They may not do any harm—properly operated, they probably do not—but, at best, I would regard them as being merely temporary expedients specially devised as first aid to the incurably lazy.

"And as for pills and boluses and bottled goods guaranteed to reduce your weight, and as for all these patented treatments and proprietary preparations which you see boosted in the papers—bah! Either they are harmless mixtures, in which event they'll probably do you no serious injury, but will certainly do you no real good; or else they contain drugs which, taken to excess, may cut you down in size, but have the added drawback of very probably cutting short your life.

"No, sir-ree! For you it's dieting, now and from now on. You may be able to relax your diet in time, but you can never altogether forego it. Give us this day our daily diet—that's your proper prayer. And you'd better start praying pretty soon, too!"

"All right, doc," I said resignedly. "You've practically converted me. I can't say I'm happy over the prospect, but if you say so I'm prepared to become a true believer. But since, between us, we're about to take all the joy out of life, let's be thorough. What must I do to be saved? Give me the horrible details right here. I might as well hear the worst at one session."

"I'm no dietitian," he said. "I don't profess to be one. That's not my line—my line is the diagnostic. Of course I could lay down a few broad general rules for your guidance—any experienced practitioner could do that—but to get the best returns you should consult a diet specialist. However, in parting—I have several paying guests waiting for me and we are now about to part—I will throw in one more bit of advice without charge. No matter what suggestions you may get from any quarter, I would urge you not to follow any banting formula so rigorous as to take off your superfluous flesh very rapidly. Take your time about it. If you live as long as both of us hope you may you'll have plenty of time. There's no rush, so go at it gradually. Be regular about it, but don't be too ambitious at the outset. Don't try to turn yourself into a tricky sprite in two weeks. For a fat man too abruptly to strip the flesh off his bones I regard as dangerous. It weakens him and depletes his powers of resistance and makes him fair game for any stray microbe which may be cruising about looking for a place to set up housekeeping."

At first blush it might appear to the lay mind that a germ would scarcely care to pick a bone when it had fat meat to feed on, but my own recollections bore out my friend's statements. I remembered a man of my acquaintance, an enormously fleshy and unwieldy man, who, fearing apoplexy, undertook

a radical scheme of banting. He lost fifty pounds in three months, so apoplexy did not get him, but pneumonia did with great suddenness. He was sick only three days. Nobody suspected that he was seriously ill until the third day, when suddenly he just hauled off and died.

So I promised to have a care against seeking to hurry myself right out of the flounder class and right into the smelt division.

VIII: THE FRIENDLY SONS OF THE BOILED SPINACH

My friend gave me the names of several men of acknowledged standing and told me I should be making no mistake did I put myself in the hands of any one on the list. I thanked him and departed from his presence. To the casual eye I may have seemed, going away, to be in high spirits; but, confidentially, I wasn't feeling so very brash. My spirits were low. I had heard the truth—I made no effort to deceive myself there—but the truth was painful.

Still, knowing what I should do, I hesitated, temporizing with myself. I gave a couple of days of intensive meditation to the subject, and then I reached this conclusion: I would read a few standard and orthodox works on dietetics, and, so doing, try to arrive at least at a superficial knowledge of the matter. Also, I would balance what one recognized authority said as against what another recognized author-

ity said, and then, before going to a specialist, I would do a little personal experimenting with my diet and mark the effects.

I arrived at this decision privately, taking no one into my confidence. And without an intent to deprive any hard-worked specialist of a prospective fee, I shall ever continue to believe that the second part of the course I chose to follow was a wise one. It might not serve my brother-in-obesity, but it served me well. I'm sure of that.

But the first part of the system naturally came first. This had to do with research work among the best authorities. Here I struck one of the snags that rise in the pathway of the hardy soul who goes adventuring into any given department of the science of medicine and its allied sciences. I was pained to observe how rare it was for two experts, of whatsoever period, to agree upon a single essential element. An amateur investigator was left at a loss to fathom why such entirely opposite conclusions should have been arrived at by the members of the same school when presumably both had had the same raw materials to work on. By their raw materials I mean their patients. But so it was.

The ancient apostles of dietetics, the original pathfinders into a hitherto untracked field, had disciples who set out to follow in their footsteps, but before they had traveled very far along the alimentary trail the disciples were

quarreling bitterly with the masters' deductions and conclusions. To-day's school was snooty touching on the major opinions of yesterday's crowd, and to-morrow's crowd already made faces at to-day's.

On just two points I found a unanimity of opinion among what might be termed the middle group of dietetic explorers as counter-distinguished from the pioneering cult and the modern or comparatively modern. Each one was so absolutely certain that he was so absolutely right and so absolutely certain that all his contemporaries were so absolutely wrong.

At the beginning, it seemed, a reduction of the sufferer's flesh had been attempted by the simple device of bleeding him copiously—not with a monthly statement, as latterly, but with a lancet. Abundant drinking of vinegar also had been recommended as a means to accomplish the desired end. They were noble drinkers in the olden times, but until I began delving into literature of the subject I did not suspect that there had been any out-and-out vinegar topers.

There was citation in an early work of the interesting case of the Marquis of Cortona, a subchieftain under the Duke of Alva, and a fine fat old butcher he must have been, too, by all tellings. Finding himself grown so rotund that no longer could he enter with zest into the massacre bees and torture outings which the Spaniards were carrying on in the harried

Netherlands, the marquis had recourse to vinegar; and so efficacious was the treatment that, as the tradition runs, he soon could wrap his loosened skin about him in great slack folds like a cloak, and thus, close-reefed, go merrily murdering his way across the Low Countries.

One pictures the advantages accruing. In cold weather, now, he might overlap his wrinkles in a clapboarded effect and save the expense of laying in heavy underwear. True, this might give to the wearer a clinker-built appearance; still it would keep him nice and warm, and no doubt he had his armor on outside the rest of his things. But likewise there must have been drawbacks. Suppose, now, the marquis were caught out in blowy weather and the wind worked in under his tucks and the ratlines pulled loose and, all full-rigged and helpless, bellying and billowing and flapping and jibing, he went scudding against his will before the gale. Could he hope to tack and go about before he blew clear over into the next county? I doubt it.

And suppose he inflated himself for a party or a reception or something, and a practical joker put a tack in a chair and he sat down on it and had a blow-out. The thought is not a pretty one, yet the thing were possible.

From these crude beginnings I worked my way down toward the present day. Doctor Banting, of England, the father of latter-day dietetics from whose name in commemoration

of his services to mankind we derive the verb intransitive "to bant," had theories wherein his chief contemporaneous German rival, Epstein the Bavarian, radically disagreed with him. Voit, coming along subsequently, disagreed in important details with both. Among the moderns I discerned where Dr. Woods Hutchinson had his pet ideas and Doctor Wiley had his, diametrically opposed. So it went. There was almost as much of disputation here as there is when a federation of women's clubs is holding an annual election. It was all so very confusing to one aiming to do the right thing.

One learned savant flatly laid down the ultimatum that the individual seeking to reduce should cut out all pork products from chitterlings clear through the list to headcheese and give his undivided support to the red meats and the white. One of his brethren was equally positive that I might partake of bacon and even ham in moderation, but urged that I walk around red meat as though it were a pesthouse. Yet a third—a foe, plainly, to the butcher, but a wellwisher to the hay-and-produce dealer if ever one lived—recommended that I should eliminate all meat of whatsoever character or color and stick closely to fodder, roughage and processed ensilage. I judge he sent his more desperate cases to a livery stable.

According to one dictum, bread was all right up to a certain point, and, according to another, all wrong. This man here held a brief for beans,

especially the succulent baked bean; that man yonder served solemn warning upon me that if perversely I persisted to continue to eat baked beans the fat globules would form so fast I would have the sensation that a little boy was inside of me somewhere blowing bubbles. The writer didn't exactly say this, but it was the inference I drew from his remarks.

Eat dried fruits until your seams give, said Doctor A. Avoid dried fruits as you would the plague, counseled the equally eminent Doctor B. Professor C considered the drinking of water with meals highly inadvisable; whereas Professor D said that without adding an extra ounce of weight I might consume water until my fluid contents sloshed up and down in me when I walked, and merely by getting a young lady in Oriental costume to stand alongside me I might qualify at a Sunday-school entertainment for the entire supporting cast of the familiar tableau entitled Rebecca at the Well. He intimated that just so I stopped short of committing suicide as an inside job all would be fine and dandy. I do not claim that these were his words; this is the free interpretation of his meaning. Sink the knife in the butter to the very hilt—there will be no ill effects but only a beneficial outcome—declares such-and-such a food faddist. Eschew butter by all means or accept the consequences, clarions an earnest voice. Well, I never was much of a hand for eschewed butter anyway. We keep

our own cow and make our own butter and it seems to slip down, just so.

In the vegetable kingdom the controversy raged with unabated fury. The boiled prune, blandest and most inoffensive of breakfast dishes, formed the basis of a spirited debate. There were pro-prunists and there were con-prunists. The parsnip had its champions and its antagonists; the carrot its defenders and its assailants. In this quarter was the cabbage heartily indorsed, there was it belittled and made naught of. The sprightly spring onion, already socially scorned in some of the best lay circles, suffered attack at the hands of at least one scientific and scholarly professional.

After reading his strictures I remarked to myself that really there remained but one field of useful popularity for the onion to adorn; in time it might hope to supplant the sunflower as the floral emblem of Kansas, as typifying a great political principle which originated in that state: The Initiative, when one took a chance and ate a young onion; the Referendum, while one's digestive apparatus wrestled with it; the Recall, if it disagreed with one. Alone, of all the vegetables, stood spinach, with not a single detractor. On this issue the vote in the affirmative practically was by acclamation. I am in position to state that boiled spinach has not an enemy among the experts. This seems but fair—it has so few friends among the eating public.

I observed much and confusing talk of the value of nitrogens, proteids and—when I had reached the ultra-modernists—vitamines. Vitamines, I gathered, had only recently been discovered, yet by the progressives they were held to be of the supremest importance in the equation of properly balanced human sustenance. To my knowledge I had never consciously eaten vitamines unless a vitamine was what gave guaranteed strictly fresh string beans, as served at a table-d'hôte restaurant, that peculiar flavor. Here all along I had figured it was the tinny taste of the can, which shows how ignorant one may be touching on vitally important matters. I visualized a suitable luncheon for one banting according to the newest and most generally approved formula:

RELISH
Mixed Gelatinoids

POTAGE
Strained Nitrogen Gumbo

ENTRÉE
Grilled Proteids With Globulin Patties

DESSERT
Compôte of Assorted Vitamines

Or the alternative course for one sincerely desirous of reducing, who believed everything he saw in print, was to cut out all the proscribed articles of food—which meant everything edible

except spinach—and starve gracefully on a diet composed exclusively of boiled spinach, with the prospect of dying a dark green death in from three to six weeks and providing one's own protective coloration if entombed in a cemetery containing cedars.

Personally I was not favorably inclined toward either plan, so I elected to let my conscience be my guide, backed by personal observation and personal experimentation. I was traveling pretty constantly all that spring, and in the smoking compartments of the Pullmans, where all men, for some curious reason, grow garrulous and confidential, I put crafty leading questions to such of my fellow travelers as were oversized and made mental notes of their answers for my own subsequent use. Since the Eighteenth Amendment put the nineteenth hole out of commission, prohibition and how to evade it are the commonest of all conversational topics among those moving about from place to place in America; but the subject of what a man eats runs it a close second for popularity.

For example, there is the seasoned transatlantic tourist who, on the occasion of a certain terrifically stormy passage, was for three days the only person on board excepting the captain who never missed a single meal. You find him everywhere; there must be a million or more of him; and he loves to talk about it, and he does.

But even more frequently encountered is the veteran drummer—no, beg pardon, the veteran district sales manager, for there aren't any drummers any more, or even any traveling salesmen; but instead we have district sales managers featuring strong selling points—I say, even more frequently encountered is the veteran district sales manager, wearing a gravy-colored waistcoat if a tasty dresser, or a waistcoat of a nongravy-colored or contrasting shade if careless, who craves to tell strangers what, customarily, he eats for breakfast.

I made it a point to study the proportions and hearken to the disclosures of such a one, and if he carried his stomach in a hanging-garden effect, with terraces rippling down and flying buttresses and all; and if he had a pasty, unhealthy complexion or an apoplectic tint to his skin I said to myself that thenceforth I should apply the reverse English to his favorite matutinal prescription.

IX: ADVENTURE OF THE FALLEN EGG

So, having mapped out my campaign of attack against my fat, I rose one morning from my berth in the sleeping car and I dressed; and firmly clutching my new-formed resolution to prevent its escape, I made my way to the dining car and sat down and gave my order to the affable honor graduate of Tuskegee Institute who graciously deigned to wait on me.

Now, theretofore, for so far back as I remem-

bered, breakfast had been my heartiest meal of the entire day, with perhaps two exceptions—luncheon and dinner. Precedent inclined me toward ordering about as many pieces of sliced banana as would be required to button a fairly tall woman's princess frock all the way down her back, with plenty of sugar and cream, and likewise a large porringer of some standard glutinous cereal, to be followed by sausages with buckwheat cakes and a few odd kickshaws and comfits in the way of strawberry preserves and hot buttered toast and coffee that was half cream, and first one thing and then another. But Spartanlike I put temptation sternly behind me and told the officiating collegian to bring me plain boiled prunes, coffee with hot milk and saccharin tablets, dry toast and one dropped egg.

The prunes and the coffee were according to specifications, although, lacking the customary cream and three lumps of sugar, the coffee was in the nature of a profound disappointment. But a superficial inquiry convinced me that the egg was not properly a dropped egg at all.

Here was a fallen egg, if I ever saw one. I was filled with pity for it—poor, forsaken, abandoned thing, with none to speak a kind word for it! And probably more sinned against than sinning, too. Perhaps there were hereditary influences to be reckoned with. Perhaps its producer had been incubator-raised, with no mother to guide her and only the Standard

Oil Company for a foster parent. And what would a New Jersey corporation know about raising a hen?

Thus in sudden compassion I mused. To the waiter, though, I said:

"There has been a mistake here, alumnus. This egg never was meant to be dropped—it was meant to be thrown. Kindly remove the melancholy evidences."

He offered to provide a substitute, but the edge of my zest seemed dulled. I made dry toast the climax of my chastely simple repast. It was simple and it was chaste, but otherwise not altogether what I should characterize as a successful repast. It lacked, as it were.

Let us pass along to noontime. Ere noontime came I was consumed with gnawing pains of emptiness. As nearly as I might judge, I contained naught save vast hollow spaces and acoustics and vacuums and empty, echoing, neglected convolutions. Sorely was I tempted to relax the rigors of the just-inaugurated régime; nobly, though, I resisted the impulse.

As I look back now on that day I find the memory of my suffering has dimmed slightly. The passage of weeks and months has served to soften the harsh outlines of poignant recollection. What now in retrospect most impresses me is the heroism I displayed, the stark fortitude, the grandeur of will power, the triumph for character. Sheer gallantry, I call it.

For my midday meal I had more dry toast, a

reduced portion of boiled tongue and a raw apple—satisfying enough to some, I grant you, but to me no more than a tease to my palate. Long before three o'clock I knew exactly how a tapeworm feels when its landlord goes on a hunger strike. Every salivary gland I owned was standing on tiptoe screaming for help; every little mucous membrane had a sorrow all its own. Each separate fiber of my innermost being cried out for greases and for sugars and for the wonted starchly compounds for to stay it and for to comfort it.

I underwent pangs such as had not been mine since away back yonder in August of 1914, in the time of the sack of Belgium, when the Germans locked up five of us for a day and a night in a cow stable where no self-respecting cow would voluntarily have stayed, and then sent us by train under guard on a three-day journey into Germany, yet all the while kept right on telling us we were not prisoners but guests of the German Army. And at the end of the third day we reached the unanimous conclusion among ourselves that the only outstanding distinction we could see, from where we sat, between being prisoners of the German Army and guests of the German Army was that from time to time they did feed the prisoners. For throughout the journey the eight of us—since by now our little party had grown—lived rather simply and frugally and, I might say, sketchily on rations consisting of one loaf of

soldiers' bread, one bottle of mineral water and a one-pound pot of sour and rancid honey which must have emanated in the first place from a lot of very morbid, low-minded bees.

However, in those exciting days there were many little moving distractions about to keep one from brooding o'ermuch on thoughts of lacking provender. I boast not, but merely utter a verity, when I state that every time I shook myself I shifted the center of population. Where we had been the lesser wild life of mid-continental Europe abounded. In the matter of a distinction which had come to me utterly without solicitation or effort on my part I have no desire to brag, but in justice to myself—and my boarders—I must add that at that moment, of all the human beings in Central Europe, I was the most densely inhabited. My companions scratched along, doing fairly well, too; but I led the field—I was so much roomier than any one of them was.

But here aboard this Pullman on this, the dedicatory day of my self-imposed martyrdom, I could not lose myself as I had on that former historic occasion in the ardor of chasing the small game of the country. By four o'clock in the afternoon I could appreciate the sensations of a conch shell on a parlor whatnot. I had a feeling that if anyone were to press his ear up against me he would hear a murmuring sound as of distant sea waves. Yet, mark you, I held bravely out, fighting still the good fight. This,

then, was my dinner, if such it might in truth be called: Clear soup, a smallish slice of rare roast beef cut shaving thin, gluten bread sparsely buttered, a cloud of watercress no larger than a man's hand, another raw apple and a bit of domestic cheese—nothing rich, nothing exotic, no melting French *fromages*, no creamy Danish pastries.

Only when I reached my demi-tasse, which I took straight, did I permit myself a touch of luxury. I lit my cigar with a genuine imported Swedish parlor match.

Followed then the first comforting manifestation, the first gratefully registered taste of recompense for my privations. I had to speak that night and in a large hall, too, and I found my voice to be clearer and stronger than usual, and found, also, that I spoke with much less effort than usual. I was sure partial fasting during the day was bearing fruits in the evening, and I was right, as subsequent evening experiences proved to me. I had rather dreaded that hunger gripes would make my night a sleepless one, but it didn't happen. I may have dreamed longing dreams about victuals, but I tore off eight solid hours of unbridled and—I dare say—uproarious rest.

X: WHEREIN OUR HERO FALTERS

Next day I kept it up, varying the first day's menus slightly, but keeping the bulk consumption down, roughly, to about one-half or pos-

sibly one-third what my rations formerly had been. Before night of the second day that all-gone sensation had vanished. Already I had made the agreeable discovery that I could get along and be reasonably happy on from 35 to 50 per cent of what until then I had deludedly thought was required to nourish me. Before the week ended I felt fitter and sprier in every way than I had for years past; more alive, more interested in things, quicker on my feet and brisker in my mental processes than in a long time. The chronic logy, foggy feeling in my head disappeared and failed to return. I may add that to date it still has not returned. Relieved of pressure against its valves—at least I assume that was what came to pass—my heart began functioning as I assume a normal heart should function, and at once the sense of oppression in the neighborhood of the heart was gone.

Within the same week I took most joyful note of the fact that I was losing flesh in the vicinities where mainly I craved to lose it—amidships and at the throat. I still had a double chin in front, but the third one, which I carried behind as a spare—the one which ran all the way round my neck and lapped at the back like a clergyman's collar—was melting away. And unless I was woefully mistaken, I no longer had to fight so desperate a battle with the waistband of my trousers when I dressed in the mornings.

I was not mistaken. Glory be and likewise selah! My first and second mezzanines were visibly shrinking. By these signs and portents was I stimulated to continue the campaign so auspiciously launched and so satisfactorily progressing.

I shall not deny that in the second week I did some backsliding. The swing of the tour carried me into the South. It was the South in the splendor of the young springtime when the cardinal bird sang his mating song. With brocading dandelions each pasture gloriously became even as the Field of the Cloth of Gold; and lo, the beginning of the strawberry shortcake season overlapped the last of the smoked-hog-jowl-and-turnip-greens period, and the voice of the turtle was heard in the land.

Figuratively, I was swept off my feet when a noble example of Southern womanhood put before my famished eyes the following items, to wit: About half a bushel of newly picked turnip greens, rearing islandwise above a sloshing sea of pot licker and supporting upon their fronded crests the boiled but impressive countenance of a hickory-cured shote, the whole being garnished with paired-off poached eggs like the topaz eyes of beauteous blond virgins turned soulfully heavenward; and set off by flankings of small piping-hot corn pones made with meal and water and salt and shortening, as Providence intended a proper corn pone should be made.

Then the years rolled away like a scroll and once again was I back in the Kentucky foothills, a lean and lathy sprout of a kid, a limber six-foot length of perpendicular appetite; and it was twelve o'clock for some people, but it was dinner time for me!

My glad low gurgle of anticipatory joy smothered the small inner voice of caution as I leaped, as it were, headlong into that bosky dell of young turnip greens. So, having set my feet on the downward path I backslode some more—for behold, what should come along then but an old-fashioned shortcake, fashioned of crisp biscuit dough, with more fresh strawberries bedded down between its multiplied and mounting layers than you could buy at the Fritz-Charlton for a hundred and ninety dollars.

Right then and there was when and where I lost all I had gained in a fortnight of stalwart self-disciplining; rather it was where I regained all I haply had lost. When, gorged and comatose, I staggered from that fair matron's depleted table I should never have dared to trundle over a wooden culvert at faster than four miles an hour. Either I should have slowed down or waited until they could put in some re-enforced-concrete underpinnings.

I was right back where I had started, and for the moment didn't care a darn either. Sin is glorious when you sin gloriously.

But I rallied. I retrieved myself. However,

I do not take all the credit to myself for this; circumstances favored me. Shortly I quitted the land of temptation where I had been born, and was back again up North living on dining cars and in hotels, with nothing more seductive to resist than processed pastry and machine-made shortcakes and Thousand Islands dressing; which made the fight all the easier to win, especially as regards the last named. I sometimes wonder why, with a thousand islands to choose from, the official salad mixer of the average hotel always picks the wrong one.

I kept on. The thing proved magically easy of accomplishment. By the fit of my clothing, if by nothing else, I could have told that several of my more noticeable convexes were becoming plane surfaces and gave promise in due season of becoming almost concave, some of 'em. But there was other and convincing testimony besides. I could tell it by my physical feelings, by my viewpoint, by my enhanced zest for work and for play.

Purposely, for the first month I refrained from weighing myself. When I did begin weighing at regular intervals I found I was losing at a rate of between two and three pounds a week. Moreover, I had now proved to my own satisfaction that within sane reasonable limitations I could resume eating most of the things which formerly I ate to excess and which I had altogether eliminated from my menus during the initiatory stages of dieting.

About the time I emerged from the novitiate class I discerned yet one more gratifying fact. If I were in the woods, camping and fishing, or hunting or tramping or riding or taking any fairly arduous form of exercise, I could eat pretty much anything and everything, no matter how fattening it might be. Work in the open air whetted my appetite, but the added exertion burned up the waste matter so that the surplus went into bodily strength instead of into fatty layers. Consumption was larger, but assimilation was perfect.

For my daily life at home, where I am writing this, I have cut out these things: All the cereals; nearly all the white bread; all the hot bread; practically all pastries except very light pastries; white potatoes absolutely; rice to a large extent; sausages and fresh pork and nearly all the ham; cream in my coffee and on fruits; and a few of the starchier vegetables.

Of butter and of cheese and of nuts I eat perhaps one-third the amount I used to eat, and of meats, roughly, one-half as much as before the dawn of reason came. Of everything except the items I just have enumerated I eat as freely as I please. And when a person begins to reckon up everything else among the edibles —flesh, fowl, fish, berries, fruits, vegetables and the rest—he finds quite a sizable list.

I shall not pretend that I do not pine often for sundry tabooed things. Take pies, now—

if there is any person alive who likes his pie better than I do he's the king of the pie likers, that's all. And I am desolated at being compelled to bar out the rice—not the gummy, glued-together, sticky, messy stuff which Northerners eat with milk and sugar on it, but real orthodox rice such as only Southerners and Chinamen and East Indians know how to prepare; white and fluffy and washed free of all the lurking library paste; with every grain standing up separate and distinct like well-popped corn and treated only with salt, pepper and butter, or with salt, pepper and gravy before being consumed.

And as for white potatoes—well, it distresses me deeply to think that hereafter the Irish potato, except when I'm camping out, will be to me merely something to stopper the spout of a coal-oil can with, or to stab the office pen in on the clerk's desk in an American-plan hotel. For I have ever cherished the Irish potato as one of Nature's most succulent gifts to mankind. I like potatoes all styles and every style, French fried, lyonnaise, O'Brien, shoestring shape, pants-button design, hashed brown, creamed, mashed, stewed, soufflé—if only I knew who blew 'em up—and most of all, baked *au naturel* in the union suit. And I miss them and shall keep on missing them. But no longer do I yearn for cream in my coffee, now that it is out of it, and I am getting reconciled to dry toast for breakfast, where once upon a time

only members of the justly famous Flap Jackson family seemed to satisfy.

Of course I imbibe alcoholic stimulant when and where procurable. From the standpoint of one intent upon cutting a few running feet off the waistline measurements this distinctly is wrong, as full well I know. But what would you? I do not wish to pose as an eccentric. I have no desire to be pointed out as a person aiming to make himself conspicuously erratic by behaving differently from the run of his fellows. Since the advent of Prohibition nearly everybody I meet is drinking with an unbridled enthusiasm; and when not engaged in the act of drinking is discussing the latest and most approved methods of evading, circumventing and defying the Federal and State statutes against drinking. Therefore I drink, too. Even so, I have not yet succeeded in accustoming my palate to strong waters indiscriminately swallowed. I confess to a fear that I shall never make a complete success of the undertaking.

I suppose the trouble with me is lack of desire. Prior to the attempted enforcement of the Eighteenth Amendment potable and vatted mixtures had but small lure for my palate, or my stomach, or my temperament. An occasional mild cocktail before a dinner, and perhaps twice a week a bottle of light beer or a glass of light wine with the dinner—these, in those old wild wicked days which ended in January, 1920,

practically made up the tally of my habitual flirtations with the accursed Demon. In the springtime I might chamber an occasional mint julep, but this, really, was a sort of rite, a gesture of salute to the young green year. Likewise at Christmas time I partook sparingly of the ceremonial and traditional egg-nog. And once in a great while, on a bitter cold night in the winter, a hot apple toddy was not without its attractions. But these indulgences about covered the situation, alcoholically speaking, so far as I was concerned. For me the strong, heady vintages, whether still or sparkling, and the more potent distillations had mighty little appeal. Champagne, to me, was about the poorest substitute for good well-water that had ever been proposed; and the Messrs. Haig & Haig never had to put on a night shift at the works on my account.

Yet I came from a mid-section of the republic where in the olden days Bourbon whiskey was regarded as a proper staff of life. The town where I was born was one of the last towns below Mason & Dixon's Line to stand out against the local option wave which had swept the smaller interior communities of America; and my native state of Kentucky was one of the two remaining states of the South, Louisiana being the other, which had not officially gone dry by legislative action up to the time when Br'er Volstead's pleasant little act went over nationally.

While I was growing up, through boyhood, through my youth and on into manhood, I had the example of whiskey-drinking all about me. Many of our oldest and most respected families owned and operated distilleries. Some of them had been distillers for generations past; they were proud of the purity of their product. Men of all stations in life drank freely and with no sense of shame in their drinking. Mainly they took their'n straight or in toddies; in those parts, twenty years ago, the high-ball was looked upon with suspicion as a foreign error which had been imported by misguided individuals up North who didn't know any better than to drown good liquor in charged water. There were decanters on the sideboard; there were jimmy-johns in the cellar; and down at the place on the corner twenty standard varieties of bottled Bourbons and ryes were to be had at an exceedingly moderate price. Bar-rail instep, which is a fallen arch reversed, was a common complaint among us.

Even elderly ladies who looked with abhorrence upon the drinking habit were not denied their wee bit nippy. They got it, never knowing that they got it. Some of them stayed pleasantly corned year in and year out and supposed all the time they merely were enjoying good health. For them stimulating tonics containing not in excess of sixty per cent of pure grain alcohol were provided by pious patent-medicine manufacturers in Chattanooga

and Atlanta and Louisville—earnest-minded, philanthropic patriots these were, who strongly advocated the closing-up of the Rum Hole, which was their commonest pet name for the corner saloon, but who viewed with a natural repugnance those provisions of the Pure Food Act requiring printed confession as to fluid contents upon the labels of their own goods. It was no uncommon thing in the Sunny Southland to observe a staunch churchgoer who was an outspoken advocate of temperance rising up and giving three rousing hiccups for good old Dr. Bunkum's Nerve Balm. And distinctly I recall the occasion when a stalwart mother in Israel, starting off to attend a wedding and feeling the need of a little special toning-up beforehand, took three wineglassfuls of her favorite Blood Purifier instead of the customary one which she took before a meal; and, as a consequence, on her arrival at the scene of festivities was with difficulty dissuaded from snatching down the Southern smilax and other decorations that she might twine with them a wreath to crown herself. She somehow had got the idea that she was the queen emeritus of the May. It was reported about town afterward that she tried to do the giant swing on the parlor chandelier. But this was a gross exaggeration; she only tried to hang by her legs from it.

Reared, as I was, amid such surroundings and in a commonwealth abounding in distilleries,

rectifying works, blending establishments, bottle-houses, barrel-houses, and saloons, I should have been a hopeless inebriate long before I came of age. The literature of any total abstinence society would prove conclusively that I never had a chance to avoid filling a drunkard's grave. Yet somehow I escaped the fate ordained for me. As I say, I drank sparingly and for long periods not at all, until Prohibition came. Then I began doing as about ninety per cent of my fellow-adult Americans began doing—which was to take a drink when the opportunity offered. As I diagnose it, we nearly all are actuated now by much the same instinct which causes a small boy to loot a jam closet. He doesn't particularly want all that jam but he takes the jam because it is summarily denied him and because he's afraid he may never again get a whack at unlimited jam.

To my way of thinking, the main result of the effort drastically to enforce Prohibition, aside from making us a nation of law-breakers, law-evaders, sneaks, bribers, bootleggers, bigots, corruptionists and moral cowards, has been to transfer the burden of inebriety from one set of shoulders to another set of shoulders. Men who formerly drank to excess have sobered up, against their will, for lack of cash or lack of chance to buy hard liquor. They cannot rake together enough coin to purchase the adulterated stuff at ten times the price they had paid for better liquor before the law went into effect.

On the other hand, men—and women—who formerly drank but little are now drinking to excess, some of them being prompted, I think, by a feeling of protest against what they regard as an invasion of their personal liberties and some, no doubt, inspired by a perfectly understandable impulse to do a thing which is forbidden when the doing of it gives them a sense of adventure and daring.

Far be it from an humble citizen to criticise our national law-making body. Far be it from him, as he contemplates the spectacle frequently presented under the dome of the Capitol at Washington, to paraphrase Ethan Allen's celebrated remark when he took Fort Ticonderoga in the name of Jehovah and the Continental fathers and exclaim: "Congress—oh, my God!" Far be it, I repeat, from such a one to do such things as these. But I trust I may be pardoned for venturing the statements that excessive drinking already was going out of fashion in this country, that the treating evil was in a fair way to die a natural death anyhow, and that the present sumptuary attempt to cure us overnight of a habit which has been ingrained in the very fibre of the race for so far back as the history of the race runs, has only had the effect of making a bad thing worse.

At that, I hold no brief for the brewer and the distiller. They got exactly what was coming to them. Had they, as a class, been content to obey the existing laws, instead of conniving

to break them; had they kept their meddling fingers out of local politics; had they realized more fully their responsibilities as manufacturers and purveyors of potentially dangerous products; had they been willing to coöperate with right-thinking men in a sane and orderly campaign for the cleaning-up and the proper regulation of the liquor traffic; had they seen that the common man's inarticulate but very definite resentment against the iniquities of the corner saloon system was tending to the legal abolition of the whole business of licensed drinking, I believe we should have had no Eighteenth Amendment saddled upon us and no Volstead act to bridle us.

In the final analysis, and stripping aside the lesser contributory causes, I maintain there were just two outstanding reasons why this country went dry after the fashion in which it did go dry: One reason was the Distiller; the other was the Brewer. And for the woes of either or both I, for one, decline to shed a single tear.

How a fellow does run on when he gets on the subject which is uppermost in the minds of the American people nowadays! All I intended to say, when I started off on this tack, a few pages back, was that if I absolutely and completely cut out all alcoholic stimulant no doubt I should be reducing my weight much faster than is the case at this writing. To-day practically all the members in good standing of the

Order of Friendly Sons of the Boiled Spinach—I mean the dietetic sharps—agree that he or she who is banting will be well-advised to drink not at all. For the most part they do not make a moral issue of this detail. Some of them refuse to concede that a teetotaler is necessarily healthier or happier or more useful to the world than the moderate imbiber is. They merely point out that whiskies and beers are, for the majority of humans, fattening things and should therefore be eliminated from the diet of those wishful to lose their superfluous adipose tissue. Here, again, they disagree with their professional forebears. The experts of the preceding generations, being mainly Englishmen and Germans, could not conceive of living without drinking. Some advocated wines, some ales, some a mixture of both with an occasional measure of spirits added for the sake of digestion. But among the dependable dietetic authorities of the present day there appears to be no wide range of argument on this point. They pretty generally agree that even a casual indulgence in beverages is not indicated for those who seek to reduce. I am sure they are right. But as I remarked just now, what can you do when you are encompassed about by the bottle-toting, sop-it-up-behind-the-door custom which has sprung up since Prohibition was slipped over on us by the Anti-Saloon League?

I confess that I have not the strength of

character to swim, almost alone, against the social current. So I partake of the occasional snort and to that extent stand a self-admitted apologist for an offense which no true reductionist should commit.

But I claim that otherwise—that in so far as the solid foodstuffs are concerned—I have, for my own individual case, exactly the right idea about it.

XI: THREE CHEERS FOR LITHESOME GRACE REGAINED!

My advice to the man or the woman who is in the same fix I was in is to go and do likewise, with variations to suit the individual temperament. It means self-denial but self-denial persevered in is a virtue, and virtue he will find—or she will—not alone is its own reward but a number of additional rewards as well. Let my late fellow sufferer likewise patronize the gymnasium and the steam room and the cold plunge if he so chooses. If he desires to have automatic pores, all right. As for me, I recall what the Good Book says about the pores which ye have always with ye, and I decline to worry about the present uncultured state of mine. Let him try the electric rollers and the electric baths, if such be his bent; no doubt they have their value. And by all means let him consult a qualified physician if he fears either that he is overdoing or underdoing his banting. Personally, though, I am satisfied

with the plan I tried out, of being my own private test tube.

I claim that I have better information touching on what sustenance I need than any outsider ever can hope to have unless he breaks into me surgically. I claim that a series of rational experiments should tell any rational human how much he needs to eat and what he needs to eat in order to reduce his bulk and yet keep his powers and his bodily vigor unimpaired. I am not speaking now, understand me, of those unfortunates with whom obesity is a disease, but of those who owe their grossness of outline to gluttony. Lacking vital statistics on the subject, I nevertheless dare assert that these latter constitute fully 90 per cent of those among the American people who are distinctly and uncomfortably and frequently unhealthily fat.

Remains but one fly in the ointment. Since Tony Sarg is going to illustrate this treatise, then Tony must revise the old working plans. For my figure is not so much pro as once it was. It is more con, if you get my meaning—the profile curves in toward, instead of being, as formerly, so noticeably from.

Still, I should worry about the troubles of an artist, even though a friend. I weighed myself this morning. Three months ago, when I set out to reduce my belt line and my collar size, I snatched the beam down ker-smack at two hundred and thirty-six pounds, stripped.

This morning I weighed exactly one hundred and ninety-seven, including amalgam fillings and the rights of translation into foreign languages, including the Scandinavian. One hundred and eighty-five pounds is my ultimate aim. Howsoever, I may keep right on when I attain that figure and justify the title of this narrative by taking a full one third off. In either event, though, I shall know exactly where I am going and I'm on my way. And I feel bully and I'm happy about it and boastfully proud.

Three rousing cheers for lithesome grace regained!

VI

THE YOUNG NUTS OF AMERICA

VI

THE YOUNG NUTS OF AMERICA

Being a Card to the Public from the Rev. Roscoe Titmarsh Fibble, D.D.

IT IS with a feeling of the utmost reluctance, amounting—if I may use so strong a word—to distress, that I take my pen in hand to indite the exceedingly painful account which follows; yet I feel I owe it not only to myself and the parishioners of St. Barnabas', but to the community at large, to explain in amplified detail why I have withdrawn suddenly, automatically as it were, from the organization of youthful forest rangers of which I was, during its brief existence, the actuating spirit, and simultaneously have resigned my charge to seek a field of congenial endeavor elsewhere.

My first inclination was to remain silent; to treat with dignified silence the grossly exaggerated statements that lately obtained circulation, and, I fear me, credence, in some quarters

regarding the circumstances which have inspired me in taking the above steps. Inasmuch, however, as there has crept into the public prints hereabout a so-called item or article purporting to describe divers of my recent lamentable experiences—an item which I am constrained to believe the author thereof regarded as being of a humorous character, but in which no right-minded person could possibly see aught to provoke mirth—I have abandoned my original resolution and shall now lay bare the true facts.

In part my motive for so doing is based on personal grounds, for I have indeed endured grievously both laceration of the tenderest sensibilities and anguish of the corporeal body; but I feel also that I have a public duty to perform. If this unhappy recital but serves to put others on their guard against a too-ready acceptance of certain specious literature dealing with the fancied delights—I say fancied advisedly and for greater emphasis repeat the whole phrase—against the fancied delights of life in the greenwood, then in such case my own poignant pangs shall not have entirely been in vain.

With these introductory remarks, I shall now proceed to a calm, temperate and dispassionate narration of the various occurrences leading up to a climax that left me for a measurable space prone on the bed of affliction, and from which I have but newly risen, though still much shaken.

When I came to St. Barnabas' as assistant to the Reverend Doctor Tubley my personal inclination, I own, was for parish work among our female members. I felt that, both by natural leanings and by training, I was especially equipped to be of aid and comfort here. Instinctively, as it were, I have ever been drawn toward the other and gentler sex; but my superior felt that my best opportunities for service lay with the males of a tender and susceptible age.

He recommended that, for the time being at least, I devote my energies to the youthful masculine individuals within the parish fold; that I make myself as one with them if not one of them; that I take the lead in uniting them into helpful bands and associations. He felt that the youth of St. Barnabas' had been left rather too much to their own devices—which devices, though doubtlessly innocent enough in character, were hardly calculated to guide them into the higher pathways. I am endeavoring to repeat here the Reverend Doctor Tubley's words as exactly as may be.

Continuing, he said he felt that our boys had been in a measure neglected by him. He had heard no complaint on this score from the lads themselves. Indeed, I gathered from the tenor of his remarks they had rather resented his efforts to get on a footing of comradeship with them. This, he thought, might be due to the natural diffidence of the adolescent youth, or

perhaps to the disparity in age, he being then in his seventy-third year and they ranging in ages from nine to fifteen.

Nevertheless, his conscience had at times reproached him. With these words, or words to this effect, he committed the boys to my especial care, adding the suggestion that I begin my services by putting myself actively in touch with them in their various sports, pursuits and pastimes.

In this connection the Boy Scout movement at once occurred to me, but promptly I put it from me. From a cursory investigation I gleaned that no distinctions of social caste were drawn among the Boy Scouts; that almost any boy of a given age, regardless of the social status of his parents, might aspire to membership, or even to office, providing he but complied with certain tests—in short, that the Boy Scouts as at present constituted were, as the saying goes, mixed.

Very naturally I desired to restrict my activities to boys coming from homes of the utmost culture and refinement, where principles of undoubted gentility were implanted from the cradle up. Yet it would seem that the germ of the thought touching on the Boy Scouts lingered within that marvellous human organism, the brain, resulting finally in consequences of an actually direful character. Of that, however, more anon in its proper place.

Pondering over the problem after evensong

in the privacy of my study, I repaired on the day following to Doctor Tubley with a plan for a course of Nature Study for boys, to be prosecuted indoors. I made a point of the advantages to be derived by carryng on our investigations beside the student lamp during the long evenings of early spring, which were then on us. What, I said, could be more inspiring, more uplifting, more stimulating in its effects on the impressionable mind of a boy than at the knee of some older person to wile away the happy hours learning of the budding of the leaflet, the blossoming of the flowerlet, the upspringing of the shootlet, and, through the medium of informative volumes on the subject by qualified authorities, to make friends at first hand, so to speak, with the wild things—notably the birdling, the rabbit, the squirrel? Yes, even to make friends with the insects, particularly such insects as the bee and the ant—creatures the habits of industry of which have been frequently remarked—besides other insects too numerous to mention.

And, finally, what could better serve to round out an evening so replete with fruitful thought and gentle mental excitement than a reading by some member of the happy group of an appropriate selection culled from the works of one of our standard authors—Wordsworth, Longfellow or Tennyson, for example? What, indeed?

To my surprise this plan, even though set

forth with all the unstudied eloquence at my command, did not appear deeply to appeal to Doctor Tubley. I surmised that he had attempted some such undertaking at a previous period and had met with but indifferent success. He said that for some mysterious reason the nature of the growing boy seemed to demand action. My own observation subsequently was such as to confirm this judgment.

In passing I may say that this attribute remains to me one of the most unfathomable aspects of the complex juvenile mentality as commonly encountered at present. Though still a comparatively young man—thirty-eight on Michaelmas Day last past—I cannot conceive that as a lad I was ever animated with the restless, and I may even say mischievous, spirit that appears to dominate the waking hours of the youth of an oncoming generation.

For proof of this assertion I would point to the fact that a great-aunt of mine, living at an advanced age in the city of Hartford, Connecticut, continues even now to treasure a handsomely illustrated and fitly inscribed copy of Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," complete in one volume, which was publicly bestowed on me in my twelfth year for having committed to memory and correctly repeated two thousand separate quotations from the Old Testament—an achievement that brought on an attack resembling brain fever. I do not record this achievement in a spirit of boastfulness or vanity

of the flesh, but merely to show that from a very early stage of my mundane existence I was by nature studious and ever mindful of the admonitions of my elders. Indeed, I do not recall a time when I did not prefer the companionship of cherished and helpful gift books to the boisterous and ofttimes rough sports of my youthful acquaintances.

But I digress; let us revert: Abandoning my scheme for a series of indoor Nature studies, since it did not meet with the approval of my superior, I set myself resolutely to the task of winning the undivided affection and admiration of the lads about me. On meeting one in the public highway or elsewhere I made a point of addressing him as "My fine fellow!" or "My bright lad!" of patting him on the head and gently ruffling his hair or twitching the lobe of his ear in a friendly way, and asking him, first, what his age might be, and, second, how he was doing at his books.

These questions being satisfactorily answered in the order named, I would then say to him: "Ah, what a large sturdy lad we are becoming, to be sure!" or "Heigho, then, soon we shall be ready to don long trousers, shall we not?" And I would also be particular to enquire regarding the health and well-being of his parents, and so on, and to ascertain how many little brothers and little sisters he had, if any; usually coupling these passing pleasantries with some quotation aimed to inspire him to

thoughtful reflections and worthy deeds. Yet to me it seemed that the lads actually sought to avoid these casual intercourses.

Attributing this to the excusable timidity of the young, I persisted, being determined to put myself on a footing of complete understanding with them. I sought them out in their hours of relaxation, there being a large vacant lot or enclosure adjacent to the parish house where they were wont to meet and mingle freely in their customary physical exercises and recreations. Here again, from time to time, I proffered certain timely hints and admonitions for their better guidance.

For example, I sought to discourage the habit so prevalent among them of indulging in shrill, indiscriminate outcry when moved by the excitement of the moment. Repeatedly I advised them to practise in concert three hearty cheers, these to be immediately followed, should the exuberance of the occasion warrant, by a ringing tiger. This I recall was the invariable habit of the playfellows described in such works as "Sanford and Merton" and "Thomas Brown's Schooldays." I also urged on them the substitution of the fine old English game of cricket for baseball, to which I found them generally addicted. It is true I had never found either opportunity or inclination for perfecting myself in one or both of these games; but the pictured representations of cricket games, as depicted in books or prints, showing the par-

ticipants dotted about over a smooth greensward, all attired in neat white flannels and all in graceful attitudes, convinced me it must be a much more orderly and consequently a more alluring pastime than the other.

To me, if I may venture to say so, baseball has ever seemed most untidy. Personally I can imagine few things more unseemly than the act of sliding through the dust in order the more expeditiously to attain a given base or station; and even more objectionable, because so exceedingly unhygienic, is the custom, common among these youthful devotees, of expectorating on the outer surface of the ball before delivering the same in the direction of the batsman.

I succeeded in inducing my young friends to allow me to drill them in the choraled cheer. As I remarked repeatedly to them: "Why noise at all, young gentlemen? But if we must have noise let us have it in an orderly fashion and in accordance with the best traditions of the Anglo-Saxon race, from which all of us have or have not sprung as the case may be—to wit, as follows: Huzza! Huzza! Huzza! Tiger!" But, with the exception of one or two lads of a docile demeanor, I made no noticeable headway in my project for substituting cricket for baseball.

Nor did my recommendation of the adoption of a uniform attire for all the lads attending the private school maintained by St. Bar-

nabas' meet with any more favorable reception. Personally I was greatly attracted to the costume provided at Eton. It impressed me that the short, close-buttoned jacket, exposing the sturdy legs, and so forth, the neat linen collar and cuffs, and the becoming black tie, the whole being surmounted by the high hat, with its air of dignity, all combined to form ideal apparel for the growing lad. Some of the mothers to whom I broached the thought viewed it with considerable enthusiasm, but among the boys themselves an unaccountable opposition immediately developed.

The male parents likewise were practically united in their objections. One husband and father, whose name I shall purposely withhold, actually sent me word he would swear out an injunction against me should I undertake to dress his innocent offspring up as a monkey-on-a-stick—the objectionable phraseology being his, not mine. In all charity I was constrained to believe that this gentleman's nature was of a coarse fibre. Had he, I asked myself dispassionately, had he no veneration for the hallowed memories and customs of a great English institution of learning? I was impelled to answer in the negative.

Thus time wore on until the beginning of the mid-year vacation drew near apace. It was at this juncture that the idea of an organization similar in character to the Boy Scouts occurred to me. I decided to borrow the plan,

with certain modifications, confining the membership exclusively to our best families.

Accordingly, on the first Saturday afternoon in the month of May I called a chosen group of lads together and explained to them my purpose, finding to my gratification that they welcomed it with the utmost enthusiasm. Possibly my manner of setting forth the project of an outing appealed to them even more than the project itself. I recall that, in part, I spoke as follows:

"With me as your leader, your guide, your mentor, we shall go forth into the open, to seek out the bosky dell; to pierce the wildwood tangle; to penetrate the trackless wilderness. Our tents shall be spread alongside the purling brook, hard by some larger body of water. There, in my mind's eye, I see us as we practise archery and the use of the singlestick, both noble sports and much favored by the early Britons. There we cull the flowers of the field and the forest glade, weaving them into garlands, building them into nosegays. By kindness and patience we tame the wild creatures. We learn to know the calls of the wildwood warblers, which I am credibly informed are many and varied in character; and by imitating those calls we charm the feathered minstrels to leave their accustomed haunts on the sheltering bough and to come and perch on our outstretched hands.

"We lave our limbs in the pellucid waters of

the lake or large body of water just referred to. We briskly project ourselves to and fro in a swing of Nature's own contriving, namely, the tendrils of the wild grapevine. We glean the coy berry from its hiding place beneath the sheltering leafage. We entice from their native element the finny denizens of the brawling stream and the murmuring brook. We go quickly hither and yon. We throb with health and energy. We become bronzed and hardy; our muscles harden to iron; our lungs expand freely and also contract with the same freedom, thus fulfilling their natural function.

"We find the day all too short, too fleeting. And by night about the crackling camp fire our happy voices, all united, are uplifted in song and roundelay. So, at length, wearied but happy, we seek repose in refreshing slumber until the rising sun or orb of day summons us to fresh delights, new discoveries, added experiences!"

My imaginative picturing of the prospect had its desired results. Without loss of time all present, they being twelve in number, enrolled as members. From the minutes of this, our first meeting, as kept by me in a neatly lined book, which I had bethought me to provide for that purpose, I herewith enumerate the roster: Master Pope, Master Stickney, Master Worthington, Master MacMonnies, Master E. Smith and Master H. Smith—brothers, Master Odell, Master French, Master

Horrigan, Master Ferguson, Master Dunworthy, and Master W. Smyth—nowise related to the foregoing Masters Smith, the name being spelled, as will be noted, with a y.

I was particularly pleased that Master Percival Pope should be included in our little band, for he was one to whom instinctively I had been attracted by reason of the gentle and almost seraphic expression of his mild blue eyes, his soft voice and his great politeness of manner.

Next in order there arose for consideration two very important matters—the selection of a title or cognomen and the choice of a suitable costume. Charging myself with the working out of an appropriate costume design, I invited suggestions for a club name, at the same time proffering several ideas of my own. Among those that were tendered I recall the following: the Young Gentlemen Forest Rangers, the Chevalier Bayard Wildwood League, the Rollo Boys, the Juvenile Ivanhoes, the Buffalo Bill Kiddos, the Young Buffaloes of the Wild West, the Junior Scalp Hunters, the Desperate Dozen, and the Johnies-on-the-Spot.

I deem it well-nigh unnecessary to state that the first four suggestions emanated from my pen: the remaining five being fruitage of the inventive fancies of my young friends.

We spent some time canvassing over the proposed cognomens, rejecting this one for one reason, that one for another reason. None

seemed to give general satisfaction. Those which especially pleased me—such, for instance, as the Rollo Boys—met with small approbation from my young compatriots, and vice versa.

At length, in the interests of harmony, I proposed that each member should confer with his parents, his guardian or his kind teacher, with a view to striking on a suitable choice, always bearing in mind that the proposed name should carry with it a thought of the woody glade, the craggy slope, the pebbly beach—in short, should remind one of Nature's choicest offerings. As I said: "Not infrequently two heads are better than one; how much more desirable then to enlist the aid of a large number of heads?" So saying, I gave the signal for adjournment until the following Monday evening at the hour of eight-thirty of the clock.

Pursuant to adjournment we met at the appointed hour and speedily arrived at a solution of our problem. One of our group—which one I shall not state, since he was the son of that same gentleman who had used such unwarranted and inconsiderate language regarding my Eton suit plan—presented a slip of paper bearing a line in the handwriting of his father. I opened and read it.

In brief the writer's idea was that we should call our organization the Young Nuts of America, and that the leader, master or commander should be known as Chief Nut or Principal

Nut. Coming from a gentleman who had expressed himself so adversely regarding a former project that had been close to my heart this manifestation of interest on his part touched me profoundly. Moreover, his suggestion appeared to my conceptions to be both timely and effective, carrying with it, as it did, a thought of the opening of the burs, of the descent of autumn on the vernal forest, of the rich meatiness of the kernel; a thought of the delectable filbert, the luscious pecan and the succulent walnut—the latter, however, having a tendency to produce cramping sensations when partaken of to excess.

These sentiments my youthful adherents appeared to share with me, for on my reading the paper aloud there followed an outburst of cheering, not unmixed with happy laughter. Checking them with a mild reminder that this was not a laughing matter, I put the proposition to a vote, and it was decided unanimously that we should be known as the Young Nuts of America and that my official title should be Chief Nut.

Master Pope then moved, seconded by Master Horrigan, that for the time being we should keep the name of our club a secret among ourselves. To me there seemed no valid reason for this and I so stated; but appreciating their boyish fancy for creating an air of pleasant and innocent mystery about whatever undertaking in which they might be engaged,

I soon waived my objection and it was so ordered by acclamation.

In this connection I desire to make a statement which may come as a surprise to many, and that is this: I have but lately—within the past few days, in fact—been informed that among persons addicted to the vice of slang the term nut is occasionally applied to other persons whom they suspect of being mentally incapable or, in short, deranged.

Personally I see no possible connection between a nut, either of some wild species or of a domesticated variety, and one who, alas, is bereft of reason. I trust, furthermore, that I am not of a suspicious nature, and assuredly I am loath to impugn sinister motives to any fellow creature; but, in view of this, to me, astonishing disclosure, I am impelled to believe either that the gentleman in question was himself ignorant of the double meaning of the word or that he deliberately conspired within himself to cast ridicule not only on me but on the band of which his own son was a devoted adherent.

Be that as it may, our next meeting was set for that evening one week thence, at which time I promised my youthful followers I would appear before them with color plates of the costume selected by me for wear on our outings; and also that I would bring all requisite information regarding the proper methods of marching, camping, and so on.

Herein I practised some small measure of

deceit, for the costume itself was already fully designed and a copy of it, intended for my own use, was nearing completion in competent hands; but I purposely withheld that information, intending to come before them properly accoutred as a happy surprise, as it were.

In my hours of leisure I had given no little thought to this matter, and finally enlisted the assistance of Miss Dorothea Peebles, who is well known as a member of our parish, and also does plain sewing and dressmaking. I called on Miss Peebles and explained to her the situation; and after an hour spent in conference we devised a garb that seemed to both of us eminently suited to the needs to which it would be put.

At the outset of our interview certain small differences of opinion asserted themselves. Miss Peebles' original suggestion of a modification of what she called the Little Lord Fauntleroy suit, to be constructed of black velvet with a flowing sash and lace cuffs, hardly seemed adapted to our purpose. I was also impelled gently to veto her next notion, which was for a replica of the apparel commonly attributed to the personage known as Robin Hood and his deluded adherents. As I was at some pains to elucidate for her understanding, I could never countenance any recognition, however remote, of an individual of the type of Robin Hood, who, however noble and generous he may have been in certain aspects, was beyond peradventure a person of uncertain moral character.

Furthermore, the color favored by her —hunter's green—though of a harmonious tint as regards the prevalent tone of the forest glades wherein we counted on roaming in a care-free manner, was by reason of its very name inappropriate, since in a carnal sense we should not be hunters at all, meaning to woo the wild creatures by acts of kindness rather than to slay them with lethal weapons.

The costume finally agreed on combined a number of distinctive touches. The headdress was a red Scotch cap—tam-o'-shanter I believe is its common appellation—to be ornamented with a feather or tuft of simple field flowers. There was to be a loose white blouse with a soft rolling collar such as sailors wear, marked on the sleeve with any desirable insignia, and joined or attached to the nether garments by means of a broad leather belt, set with a buckle. It was my own conception that the nether garments should be in hue blue, and should end just above the knees; also, that the stockings should be rolled down on the limbs, thus leaving the knees bare, after the custom followed by the hardy Tyrolese and the natives of the Highlands. We agreed that the matter of outer coats or woven jackets—I dislike the word sweater—for further protection in inclement atmospheric conditions, should be left to the dictates of the individual. I deplored this, however, as tending to mar the general effect.

All this having been arranged, Miss Peebles volunteered to construct a costume for me according to measurements that, for the sake of the proprieties, I made myself and sent to her by mail. With my mind relieved of this duty, I set diligently about the task of acquainting myself fully with the duties of my position. I procured a number of helpful works, including among others: "Who's Who Among the Plants, Flowers, Herbs and Shoots"; "How to Know the Poison Ivy—a Brochure"; "Archery in All Its Branches"; "The Complete Boy Camper," by a Mr. E. Hough; and an authoritative work on swimming and diving. To the last-named volume I applied myself with all intensity. I felt that a thorough knowledge of swimming was essential to my position as guide and instructor to these young minds.

In my youth I never learned to swim; in fact, I went swimming but once. On that occasion the water was unpleasantly chilly; and on my venturing out waist-deep there was a sensation—a delusion if you will—that all the important vital organs had become detached from their customary alignments and were crowding up into the throat, impeding utterance and distracting the thoughts from the work in hand.

Also, on emerging from the pool I found my young companions in a spirit of mistaken pleasantry had tied my garments into quite hard knots. This inconsiderate and thoughtless

act so disturbed me that I did not repeat the experiment. Besides, on my returning home and repeating the entire incident in the family circle my mother admonished me that the downfall of countless youths properly dated from the day when they first went swimming with idle comrades without having previously procured the consent of their parents—a thing which from that hour forth I never thought of doing.

In order to acquire proficiency at swimming it was imperative on me, therefore, to start at the beginning. Fortunately the book on this subject was very explicit in text and contained many charts and diagrams showing the correct evolutions. With this book open before me at the proper place I lay prone on the floor, striking out with my arms and legs according to the printed instructions, and breathing deeply through the nostrils. It was while I was so engaged that my housekeeper, Mrs. Matilda Dorcas, came into my room without knocking; for a moment the situation became mutually embarrassing.

Thereafter when prosecuting my studies I took the precaution to lock my bedroom door, thus insuring privacy. The result was, within four days I could compliment myself with the reflection that I had completely mastered the art of swimming, being entirely familiar with the various strokes, including the breast stroke, the trudgeon stroke, the Australian crawl stroke,

and others of an even quainter nomenclature.

To the best of my present recollection, it was on a Friday evening—Friday, the twenty-first ultimo—that Miss Peebles sent to me by messenger my completed uniform, done up in a paper parcel. Having by telephone notified the twelve charter members to attend a special called meeting that evening at the parish house, I repaired to my rooms immediately after tea and proceeded to attire myself in the costume, standing meantime before my mirror to study the effect. In the main, Miss Peebles had adhered to the original design, except that the nether garments or knickerbockers were of rather a light and conspicuous shade of blue—I believe this color tone is known vernacularly as robin blue—and she had seen fit to garnish their outer seams and the cuffs of the blouse with rows of white buttons of a pearl-like material and rather augmented size, which added a decorative but perhaps unnecessary touch of adornment.

Also, if I may so express myself, there was a feeling of undue publicity about the throat, this being due to the open collar, and in the vicinity of the knees. I am somewhat slender of form, though not too slender, I take it, for my height, standing, as I do, five feet six inches in my half hose, and I trust I am free from the sin of personal vanity; but I confess that at the moment, contemplating my likeness in the

mirror, I could have wished my knees had not been quite so prominently conspicuous, and that the projection of the thyroid cartilage of the larynx, vulgarly called Adam's apple, had been perhaps a trifle less obtrusive.

To my slenderness I also attribute a feeling as though all was not well in the vicinity of the waistline, even though I tightened and retightened my belt so snugly as to cause some difficulty in respiring properly. From the time when I ceased to wear short trousers, which buttoned on, I have ever had recourse to braces or suspenders; and the lack of these useful but perhaps not beautiful adjuncts to a wardrobe gave a sensation of insecurity which, for the nonce, proved disconcerting in the extreme.

Emotions that at this moment I find it hard to interpret in words actuated me to leave the house in a quiet and unostentatious fashion—by the back door, in fact—and to proceed on my way to the parish house, two blocks distant, along a rather obscure side street. I was perhaps halfway there when through the falling dusk I discerned, approaching from the opposite direction, three of my parishioners—a Mr. G. W. Pottinger, whom from our first acquaintance I suspected of possessing an undue sense of humor, and his daughters, the Misses Mildred and Mabel Pottinger.

For the moment I was possessed by a mental condition I may define as being akin to embarrassment. Involuntarily I turned into the

nearest doorway. My object was to avoid a meeting; I tell you this frankly. Immediately, however, I noted that the door I was about to enter was the door of a tobacco dealer's shop. As though frozen into marble, I halted with my hand on the latch. I have never had recourse to that noxious weed, tobacco, in any form whatsoever, except on one occasion when, in the absence of camphor, I employed it in a crumbled state for the purpose of protecting certain woolen undergarments from the ravages of the common moth.

Indeed, my attitude in regard to tobacco is as firm as that of the youth, Robert Reed, whose noble and inspiring words on this subject, embodied in verse form, I have frequently quoted to the growing youth about me. I realized instantly that to be seen in the apparent act of leaving or entering the establishment of a tobacconist would, in a sense, be compromising; so I retreated to the sidewalk just as Mr. Pottinger and the Misses Pottinger arrived at that precise point.

In the gloaming I fain would have passed them with dignified yet hurried movement; but they put themselves directly in my path, and as recognition was now inevitable, I halted, removing my cap with my right hand while with my left I continued, as I had been doing ever since leaving my lodgings, to retain a firm grasp on my waistline.

"Good evening!" I said. "Is it not a pleasant

evening since the cool of evening set in? Good evening! Good-bye!" And so I would have continued on my way.

Mr. Pottinger somehow barred the way. I heard Miss Mildred Pottinger give voice to a species of gasp, while Miss Mabel, the younger sister, a young girl and much addicted, I fear, to levity, began uttering a gurgling, choking sound that somewhat to my subconscious annoyance continued unabated during the interview which followed.

"Good evening!" said Mr. Pottinger, clearing this throat. "I beg your pardon, Doctor Fibble, but may I ask—Mabel, please be quiet! —may I ask whether you are going to a fancy-dress party somewhere?"

"By no means," I replied. "I am en route, sir, to attend a special or called meeting of our newly formed boys' outing club. These are the habiliments designed for club use."

"Oh!" he said. "Oh, I see! Mabel, child, kindly restrain yourself. Don't you see Doctor Fibble and I are talking? Ahem! And is any one besides yourself going to wear this—er—er —regalia in public?"

Having no sons of his own, Mr. Pottinger naturally would be unacquainted with the aims and objects of my present activities. Therefore I could well understand his ignorance.

"Oh, yes, indeed," was my answer; "all of our members are to wear it."

"What will you bet?" Such was his astonish-

ing rejoinder—I say astonishing, because nothing had been said regarding a wager and certainly nothing had been farther from my own thoughts.

"What will I bet?" I echoed, for the instant nonplussed. Then consciousness of what I had just said came to me with a shock. Releasing my waistband I clasped both my hands before me in an attitude to which I am much given when desirous of signifying unwonted intensity of feeling. "Mr. Pottinger," I said gravely, "I never bet. I regard it as a reprehensible practice. I am bitterly opposed under all circumstances to the hazard of chance."

"All right! Excuse me," he said; "only it seems to me you're taking one now. Well, good evening, doctor, and good luck to you! Er—you don't mind my complimenting you on your gameness, do you?"

And so he departed, continuing as long as he remained in my hearing to reprehend his younger daughter concerning her unseemly and ill-timed outbursts.

This episode, trifling though it was, served rather to increase than to diminish my nervousness; but upon my entering the assembly hall, where my young friends were gathered together awaiting my coming, all sense of trepidation vanished, so spontaneous and uproarious was their greeting. The chorus of lusty young voices raised in instantaneous cheering was to me sufficient reward for all the

pains to which I had been put. One and all, they manifested the deepest interest in the new uniform.

At the request of Master Pope—he to whom I have already referred in terms of high praise—I, standing on the small raised platform, turned round and round slowly, in order that he and his fellows might better study the effect, the enthusiasm increasing all the time until the sound was really quite deafening in volume. It was, indeed, a refreshing experience, following so closely on the Pottinger incident; and I veritably believe that, had I not grown slightly dizzy, those brave boys would have kept me revolving there for an hour.

"Now, then, my fine fellows," I said, when the noise had died down, "I shall distribute among you twelve water-color drawings, done by your leader's own hand, showing the general plan and color scheme to be followed in executing this costume. Master Pope, will you kindly pass out these copies to your mates?"

This done and the members being warned to have their uniforms speedily ready, I announced that on the following Thursday we should embark on our first invasion of the forest primeval, going for a camping expedition of three days to the shores of Hatcher's Lake, a body of water situate, as I had previously ascertained, a distance of forty miles by rail from the city and four miles more from the station at Hatchersville, a small village.

"We shall proceed to this obscure hamlet on the steam cars," I explained, "and thence to our appointed place afoot, bearing our camp baggage and other accoutrements with us."

With an uplifted hand I checked the outburst that was about to follow this announcement.

"Remember, please, the proprieties!" I said. "Now then, all together, after me: Huzza! Huzza! Huzza!—Tiger!"

As the echoes died away Master Horrigan spoke:

"How about tents?" he said.

"How about a cook?" This came from Master E. Smith, the stouter of the two Smiths with an i.

"How about cots?" This last speaker, as I recall, was Master MacMonnies.

Other questions of a similar tenor volleyed on me from all quarters.

For a space of time measurable by minutes I was quite taken aback. So engrossed had I been with the costume, with acquiring skill at swimming, and with ordering from Boston a genuine English yew bow and a sheaf of arrows, that until this moment these lesser details had entirely escaped my attention; but at once my mind was at work on the situation.

I recalled that in the work by Mr. Hough, entitled, "The Complete Boy Camper," of which, as I have remarked before, I already had a copy by me, there was a chapter describing how a balmy couch, far superior to any

ordinary bed, might be constructed of the boughs of the spruce, the hemlock, the cedar, or other evergreen growths indigenous to our latitude; and also a chapter describing methods of cooking without pots or pans over a wood fire. The author went so far as to say that bacon was never so delicious as when broiled on a pointed stick above the glowing coals in the open air, thus preserving the racy tang of the woods; while it was stated that the ideal manner of preparing any small game or fish for human consumption was to roll it in a ball of wet clay and then roast it in the glowing ashes.

It was set forth that the person in charge of the cooking should never pluck or skin the game, or even open its interior for the purpose for which I believe such interiors are opened in similar cases; but that when the fire had died down and the ball had assumed a bricklike consistency, one had but to rake the latter forth, whereupon it would split apart; that the skin, feathers or scales, as the case might be, adhering to the inner surfaces of the dried clay, would be removed, so to speak, automatically; and that the innermost contents of the animal, bird or fish—I hesitate to use the word employed in the book—that the contents, as I shall call them, would then be found drawn up into a small, hard knot, leaving the meat ready to be eaten.

The author of the book went on to say that when in the woods he rarely prepared his food

after any other fashion, and that so cooked, with the addition of a little salt, it was invariably deliciously flavored—in short, a dish fit for a king.

Recalling these things, I told the lads they need not concern themselves with such matters as cots and culinary utensils—that I would take those matters in hand. I realize now, in the light of subsequent events, that I spoke o'erhastily; but, inspired with confidence by my readings, I felt no doubt whatever regarding my ability to master such emergencies as might arise.

As for tents, I said that with the aid of a small axe I could within a few minutes, by following certain directions given in "The Complete Boy Camper," construct commodious and comfortable lean-forwards. The work in question had spoken of these edifices as lean-tos, but I preferred the word lean-forwards as being more grammatical and more euphonious as well.

With a few parting admonitions from me concerning the costume, personal toilet appendages, the hour of leaving, and so on, the meeting then broke up, the boys scattering into the darkness with ringing halloos of unalloyed happiness, all very refreshing to hear, while I wended my homeward way filled with not unpleasing reflections of the prospect before me.

However, these thoughts were soon dissi-

pated, for the intervening days were so filled with labor that I preserve but an indistinct and blurred recollection of them. Just when I was sure that every imaginable contingency had been provided for, some other item, unforeseen until then, would crop up. I was kept busy revising and enlarging my list of needful articles and scurrying about here and there among tradespeople, finally staggering home at twilight laden with parcels and quite on the verge of exhaustion. Really it was very annoying.

Even with the coming of night there was no surcease, for such was my sense of my own responsibilities that my sleep was much broken. I would wake with a start from troubled slumber to remember something of importance that I had until that moment entirely forgotten. I developed a severe headache and became so distraught that to the simplest questions I made strangely incongruous answers. Once, at eventide, on Mrs. Dorcas' coming into my study to enquire what I would have for breakfast the ensuing morning, I mechanically answered, to the no small astonishment of that worthy person: "Spruce boughs!"

Nevertheless, the day of departure found me quite prepared. At least I fancied I was amply prepared for all situations; but who can forestall the emergencies that may confront one when one, leaving one's accustomed mode of life, plunges one's self headlong into another sphere,

of an entirely dissimilar aspect? Who, I repeat, can foretell these?

I had meant to proceed afoot to the station, carrying my impedimenta, as an example of hardihood and endurance for the benefit of my young adherents; but such was the number of parcels and their awkwardness of shape and bulk that at the final moment, after I had painfully strained my arms in an effort to raise the largest pack to my back, and after I had been repeatedly tripped by the handle of my woodsman's axe, which I wore in my belt, I suffered Mrs. Dorcas to summon a hired hack or conveyance. Seated on the rear seat of this vehicle, carrying some of my equipage in my lap and having the rest piled about me, I was conveyed to the station.

Seemingly tidings of our excursion had spread, for an unusually large crowd was gathered on the platform as I drove up. Again, if I must own it, the old feeling of conspicuousness in regard to my throat and knees assailed me. Possibly this emotion was accentuated by a trifling circumstance that eventuated as I sought to alight from the hack. Hampered by my belongings, I stumbled on the handle of my axe, which persistently trailed between my limbs, and was thrown headlong between the wheels, while many of my dislodged parcels descended on me, retarding my efforts to regain my equilibrium.

Having been assisted to my feet by several

bystanders, I lost no time in entering the waiting room, where, noting that I was apparently the object of some quite unnecessary curiosity on the part of those present, I remained in a corner surrounded by my bundles and with my handkerchief fanning my face, which felt quite warm, until the moment for departure drew near. Several times during this interval I caught myself regretting that I had arrived so early; half an hour or more elapsed before my young followers began to appear, straggling in one by one.

To my great surprise and no less disappointment I discovered that of all our number I alone was properly clad and accoutred for this, our very first outing. In the main the members who appeared were attired merely in their customary garments. Each in turn explained that for various reasons he had been unable to secure his completed costume in proper time. Four of the lads, as I learned at secondhand, through the diligence of their mothers, had acquired the prescribed apparel; but all four, strange to say, had been taken ill that very morning and now sent their excuses, expressing deep regret at being unable to join us. Really, when I recall what was to occur in my own instance it would almost seem to one superstitiously inclined that a sort of fatality attached to the wearing of the garb.

At the last moment Master Dunworthy,

our youngest member, arrived in charge of his mother; and he, I was rejoiced to behold, was properly apparelled in the regulation red cap, white blouse and light blue nether garments. A diffidence, with which I could in a measure sympathize, induced Master Dunworthy to walk closely behind his mother; in fact it might almost be said he came forward unwillingly, impelled by the firm grip of the maternal hand on his collar. He was also sobbing audibly, presumably from homesickness.

With a view to assuaging his distress I made him color bearer on the spot and conferred on him the compliment of bearing our flag—white, with a red border and a design of a large blue filbert in the centre—a banner of my own designing and worked out by Miss Peebles. I could have wished the filbert had looked more like a filbert and less like a melon; but the general effect, I flattered myself, was excellent. Yet the bestowal of this honor failed to revive the despondent spirits of Master Dunworthy.

Up to the moment of leaving, I cherished the hope that some of the absentees would appear, but that was not to be. When with infinite difficulty I had marshalled my charges aboard the train, amid the friendly laughter and cheering of the crowd, I found that we were, all told, but seven in number; and but a moment after we were reduced to six, since Master Dunworthy unaccountably vanished, leaving the flag behind him.

So engaged was I in the task of bestowing our seemingly innumerable trappings properly that the train was actually in motion before I became cognizant of his disappearance. Convinced that he had been left behind by accident, I entreated the conductor to return for our color bearer; but this the conductor refused to do, saying it was enough to be running a circus train without having to back up every time one of the animals got lost, strayed or stolen. This I took to be a veiled thrust at our little band and as such I treated it with dignified silence.

We were presently rolling away through the peaceful, sunlit countryside at an exhilarating speed, and I, little dreaming of what was in store for me and believing all our troubles were now behind us, felt tempted to indulge myself in the luxury of drawing several deep breaths of relief. However, fresh distractions occurred. I was much annoyed to discern among the remaining lads a romping and disorderly spirit, which I was at pains to discourage, at first by shakes of the head and frowns, and ultimately by expressions of open reproof, such as "Tut! Tut!" and "Pray be done, young gentlemen! I beseech you to be done."

To me it appeared that certain of the adult passengers, by covert signs and sounds of approval, were actually abetting and encouraging the urchins in their misbehavior. Master

Pope, alone of all his fellows, maintained a suitable deportment. As he sat demurely behind me I observed him in the act of imitating my gestures of reproof to his less decorous comrades—a manifestation of the emulative spirit which gratified me no little.

I own that I was much rejoiced to hear the verbal announcement of the conductor's assistant—known, I believe, as the brakeman—that Hatchersville would be the next stopping place. True enough, the train, as though to confirm his words, stopped almost immediately. As we left the car, myself bringing up the rear and bearing the flag in addition to my other belongings, some slight delay was occasioned by the flagstaff getting crosswise in the door opening. As, with the brakeman's good offices, I succeeded in dislodging it from its horizontal position, a voice behind me called out, "Good-bye, little Tut-tut!" which offensive remark was at once caught up by others.

I framed a fitting and, I think, a crushing retort, but before I had entirely completed it in my own mind the cars had moved on and I found myself standing with my diminished troop on the platform, surrounded by a staring ring of rustics of all ages and conditions.

For some reason these persons appeared to labor under the impression that we constituted some sort of travelling amusement enterprise. One of them, a person of elderly aspect, asked me what kind of medicine I was selling, and a

number of small boys requested me to shoot with my bow and arrows for their delectation. Disregarding these impertinences, I enquired of the elderly man how one might best reach Hatcher's Lake.

"Straight down the main pike," he replied, pointing to a gravel-coated road winding away toward the top of an adjacent hill; "but it's better'n three miles, and if you're aimin' to give a free show and sell Injun Bitters or somethin' you'd a heap better stop right here, because you'd git a bigger crowd than you would up at the lake."

Rendered pettish, possibly irritable, by the display of an ignorance so dense and incomprehensible, I waved him aside without deigning to answer.

"Fall in!" I bade my followers in a military manner; and then, when they had gathered up their belongings: "Forward—march!"

In his crude vernacular, which I have endeavored to reproduce faithfully, the aged rustic had said Hatcher's Lake was better than three miles distant. I am convinced what he meant was not better but worse.

As we marched away over the brow of the hill the sun shone down with excessive and caloric fervor and the dust rose in thick clouds, coating our lineaments, which already were bedewed with perspiration. Momentarily the articles that filled my arms and hung on my shoulders and back grew more cumbersome

and burdensome, and speedily I developed a blistered and feverish condition of the feet or pedal extremities.

I think it must have been at about this time I dropped my shaving outfit, a washrag and my toothbrush out of the breast pocket of my blouse, and lost, presumably from under my arm, the small parcel containing my bedroom slippers and a garment intended for nightwear exclusively. A vial of cold cream, all my spare pocket handkerchiefs, and the brochure on the peculiarities of the poison ivy also disappeared during the journey—but at exactly what point I know not and could not, with propriety, undertake to say. Throughout the march, however, though well-nigh spent and exhausted, I clung to the other burdens, holding in my hands and under my arms, among other things, the bow and arrows, the flag, the axe, a blanket, a cake of soap, and a small sofa pillow of pale pink which Mrs. Dorcas had insisted on my bringing with me.

I have not at my command words proper to describe my profound relief when, after travelling what seemed a great distance, mainly uphill, we reached a point where, advised by a signpost, we turned off the main highway into a wooded bypath traversing aisles of majestic forest monarchs, which seemed to extend for vast distances in every direction, and came at length to our destination.

How cool seemed the placid mirror of the

lake, with its surface unruffled, or practically so! How inviting the mossy greensward! How grateful the dense shade! How cooling to parched lips the cool fluid bubbling from its spring or fountain! To complete enjoyment of this last named there was but one drawback. We had forgotten to bring any drinking cups.

Master Horrigan contrived to fashion his hat into some manner of drinking receptacle, and after some passing reluctance I was induced to slake my thirst with the aid of this; but I am sure I should never care to drink regularly from a boy's hat.

Our thirst being sated, the lads manifested an inclination to remove their garments and dash headlong into the waters of the lake; but I said them nay.

"All things in order," quoth I, "and one thing at a time, if you please, my young comrades. First, we must, as the cant word goes, pitch our camp and prepare our temporary habitations; then shall we partake of suitable midday refreshment. After which, following a period devoted by me to helpful discourse and the exercise of the digestive processes on the part of all present, we may safely consider the advisability of disporting ourselves in yon convenient sheet or pool of water; but, in view of our arduous march just completed, I feel that we should be amply justified in reclining on the greensward for a brief passage of time."

So saying, I set the example by throwing

myself in a prone attitude on the turf; but not for long did I remain thus. Considering its mossy appearance, the earth seemed unduly hard and strangely unsuited to serve as a cushion for the recumbent human form. In addition, there was an amazing prevalence of insect life, all of it characterized by a restless and constant activity.

Ofttimes have I read verses by our most inspired poets telling of the delights of lying prostrate within the leafy fastnesses of the forest deep, but I am forced to believe these poets were elsewhere when engaged in inditing their immortal lines. On suitable occasions I have myself indulged in poesy; but I am quite certain I could not court the muse while ants were crawling on my limbs and even invading my garments, as in the present instance. Earwigs were also remarked

So, rising, I cautioned my followers to withdraw themselves to a safe distance; and then, with the aid of the woodsman's axe—borrowed from our worthy hardware merchant, Mr. J. T. Harkness, to whom credit is due for his abundant kindness—I proceeded to fell or cause to fall the trees of which I proposed constructing our lean-forwards, two or more in number.

My initial object of attack was a large tree; but, finding its fibres to be of a singularly hard and resistant nature, and the axe manifesting an unaccountable tendency to twist in my

hands, causing the sides of the axe rather than its edged portion to strike against the tree, resulting in painful shocks to my arms and shoulders, I was soon induced to abandon it for a smaller tree.

In circumference of trunk this second tree was hardly more than a sapling, yet it required upward of half an hour of the most arduous and persistent labor, and several large water blisters appeared on the palms of my hands before it tottered, bent, cracked and finally fell quivering on the earth. In descending it perversely took the wrong direction, narrowly escaping striking me in its fall; indeed, one of its lower limbs severely scratched my left cheek.

Nor did the severed trunk possess the neat and symmetrical appearance I have noted in the case of trees felled by professional woodsmen. Rather did it present the aspect of having been gnawed down by slow degrees, resembling, if I may use the simile, a very hard lead pencil, the point of which has been renewed with a very dull knife.

A hasty mental calculation now convinced me that at this rate of progress many hours or possibly days would elapse before I felled a sufficient number of trees to construct one or more lean-forwards of the dimensions I had in mind. Desiring opportunity to ponder over this, I suggested to the lads, who were seated in a row following my movements with every

indication of lively interest, that we desist for the time from building operations and enjoy luncheon, which announcement was greeted with audible approval by all.

"Let us build a true woodsmen's camp fire," I said; "and over it I shall broil for your delectation succulent slices of crisp bacon."

Almost immediately a cheery fire was burning on the shore of the lake. From the stock of supplies I brought forth a strip of bacon, finding it much greasier than I had anticipated; I may say I had never before handled this product in its raw state. I set about removing a suitable number of slices. Here an unanticipated contingency developed—in the press of other matters I had failed to provide a knife or other edged tool with which to slice it. One of the lads produced from his pocket a small knife; but, suspecting from the appearance of the blade the presence of lurking bacteria, I used the axe. This gave the slices a somewhat uneven and ragged appearance.

Affixing a suitable fragment of the meat on a forked stick, I fell to broiling it. The smoke from the fire proved most annoying. No matter in what position one placed oneself, or where one stood, this smoke invaded one's nostrils and eyes, causing choking and smarting sensations. Then, too, in the early stages of my cooking operations a caterpillar fell from a bough overhead down the back of my neck.

I was taken quite unaware, I do assure you.

I have ever entertained a distaste, amounting to aversion, for caterpillars, both in an active living state and when they have been crushed beneath the careless foot. With me this attained to a deep-rooted antipathy. Even at the sight of one progressing on a limb or leaf, by wrinkling up its back, I can with difficulty repress a visible shudder. How much greater the shock, then, to feel it descending one's spinal column?

I uttered a short, involuntary outcry and, stepping backward, I encountered some slippery object and was instantly precipitated with jarring force to the earth. It appeared that I had set my foot on the strip of bacon, which inadvertently I had left lying on the ground directly in my rear. An unsightly smear of grease on the reverse breadth of my blue knickerbockers was the consequence. I endeavored, though, to pass off the incident with a pleasant smile, saying merely:

"Accidents will happen in the best-regulated families, will they not? Oh, yes, indeed!"

The first strip of bacon having fallen in the fire and been utterly destroyed, I prepared another; and, as Master Pope volunteered to stand vigilantly on guard behind me and prevent other caterpillars from descending on me, I resumed my task. Nevertheless, Master Pope's ministrations proved of small avail. During the course of the next few minutes no less than six separate and distinct caterpillars,

besides a small black beetle or cockchafer of a most repellent aspect, fell down my back.

Once, turning my head suddenly, I found Master Pope holding a caterpillar extended between the thumb and forefinger of his right hand almost directly above the nape of my neck. He explained that he had plucked it out of midair as it was in the act of dropping from the leafage above. I admired his presence of mind greatly, but his courage yet more. I confess that except to save human life I should never have the fortitude to grasp a caterpillar with an ungloved hand.

Doubtlessly because of the nervousness occasioned by the prevalence of caterpillars, the bacon as broiled was not the unqualified success I had been led to expect from reading Mr. Hough's work. Personally, I could not grow rapturous over the wildwood tang of which so much has been said in a complimentary way by other and more experienced campers than myself. I am inclined to think the wildwood tang must be an acquired taste.

Altogether, I fear our noontide repast might have proved rather a failure had it not been that Master Horrigan's mother at the hour of his departure had bestowed on him a quantity of ham sandwiches and a large lemon-jelly cake of the layer variety. Eliminating broiled bacon from our menu we lunched, therefore, on sandwiches and a part of the cake, the latter in particular being quite agreeable to the palate

though in a somewhat shaken and disturbed state from being transported beneath Master Horrigan's arm.

The immediate pangs of hunger being assuaged, I craved tea. Tea is the one stimulant in which I indulge. A cup of moderately strong Oolong, slightly weakened by the addition of a modicum of cream or hot milk, with three lumps of sugar in it, is to me a most refreshing drink and one to which I am strongly drawn. So I set about brewing myself a portion of tea.

Again backsets developed. I enumerate them: First, I knew nothing, except by the merest hearsay, of the art of brewing tea. Second, I had failed to provide myself with a teapot or similar vessel. Third, in the natural confusion of the moment I had left the tea on board the train. Fourth, there was no milk, neither was there cream or sugar. A sense of lassitude, with a slight headache, was the result of my having perforce to forego my customary cup.

I had meant to devote the hour following the meal to an enlivening discourse on the joys of outdoor life and communion with Nature in her devious moods, as the poet hath said, to be couched in language suitable for the understanding of my hearers. Accordingly, stretching myself prone on my blanket, with my pink sofa pillow beneath my head, I began an opening sentence.

Shortly thereafter I must have drifted off;

for, on being wakened by the efforts of an ant to penetrate my inner ear, I discovered, somewhat to my disapproval since there had been no order to this effect, that the five youngsters had divested themselves of their outer garbings and were disporting themselves in the lake—some wading near shore, some diving headlong from a fallen log that protruded from the bank. A superficial scrutiny of their movements showed me that, though all were capable of sustaining themselves in the unstable element, scarce one of them made any pretence of following out the evolutions as laid down for guidance in the work entitled "Swimming in Twenty Easy Lessons."

Without loss of time I repaired to the shelter of a near-by thicket, where I removed my costume and folded it neatly, as is my wont, and swiftly attired myself in a new bathing suit. In another moment I had mounted the fallen log and was advancing toward the spot where they were splashing about.

"Hold, young gentlemen—hold!" I called out, at the same time halting them with a wave of my hand. "Kindly desist and give to me your undivided attention. The method employed by you in keeping your persons afloat is, as I note, faulty in the extreme. By actual demonstration I shall now instruct you in the rudiments of this graceful art."

With these words, I advanced another step and yet another. At this instant my foot

slipped on the rounded surface of the recumbent tree, and before I could extend my limbs forth and arrange them in the proper attitude for making the first stroke, in fact before I had an opportunity for taking any precautionary measures whatsoever, I was propelled outward and downward upon the bosom of the lake, striking with considerable violence on my lower diaphragm.

To my astonishment, I might even say to my most complete astonishment, I went under practically instantaneously. This immediately induced a sense of uneasiness, which increased to actual apprehension when I found it impossible to straighten myself on the water in the posture illustrated in Diagram A in the first lesson.

Instinctively I felt all was not well with me!

With a view, therefore, to securing temporary assistance until I could collect myself and regain my customary calmness, I opened my mouth to utter certain words; but, instead of speech issuing forth, a considerable volume of water poured down my throat, producing a muffled, gurgling sound. From this point on my apprehension grew perceptibly until I grasped the helping hands that were extended to me and, after a few struggles, was, by the aid of those chivalrous youths, drawn in a weak and temporarily voiceless condition to safety on the bank.

There for some time I was content to remain,

permitting the water I had inadvertently swallowed to pour forth from my interior, the lads continuing to frolic about in the treacherous lake until I had entirely recovered. Thus some time passed. Finally, summoning them to me I stated that the first swimming lesson was herewith suspended until a more suitable moment, and gave the command for catching a number of finny beauties for our evening meal. This, however, was rendered impossible by reason of our having no fish-hooks or other suitable appurtenances for catching them. Really, it would seem that for the simplest outing an almost incalculable number and variety of accessories are needful!

In view of this situation I promptly devised an altered plan of campaign. Inwardly I had already gained my own consent to abandon the project of building any lean-forwards for our use on this particular occasion. I now split our strength into parties of equal number and, detailing Masters Ferguson and Horrigan to aid me in constructing woodsmen's couches, I assigned to Masters Pope, E. Smith and H. Smith the task of faring forth into the wilderness that encompassed us to seek the wild fruit and to kill, as painlessly as possible, sufficient wild game for our next repast.

At the same time I warned them, above all things, to avoid destroying the feathered songsters. Under other circumstances I would have decried slaughtering any living creatures

whatsoever; but in the existing emergency a certain amount of carnage appeared inevitable, for, as I said to them: "Must we not eat? Shall we not obey Nature's first law?"

To bring about this consummation I intrusted to Master Pope my bow and sheath of arrows, instructing him verbally, so far as I remembered it, in the knowledge of using these weapons, as contained in the manual on that subject, "Archery in All Its Branches."

With merry cries—for the spirits of these brave lads seemed unquenchable—the three huntsmen moved off through the trees; and at once their forms were lost to sight, while I gave myself over to superintending the labors of my chosen aides in the gathering of boughs of the fragrant evergreen, and in arranging this material at equidistant intervals about our camp-fire site so as to form six springy couches. As completed, these couches lacked that luxurious appearance I had been led to expect; but I consoled myself with the reflection: Pretty is as pretty does!

We had barely concluded our labors when, with glad halloos, our returning comrades came into sight bearing the spoils of the chase, consisting of a brace of large birds, one being black in color, the other white, and both quite dead. At once I was struck by the resemblance of these birds to ordinary barnyard fowls, but Master Pope explained that they were woodcock. His uncle, Mr. H. K. Pope,

our local poultry dealer, frequently carried such woodcock in stock, he said; so I was reassured.

Nor was this all. The Masters Smith had picked a considerable quantity of wild strawberries. Theretofore I had always supposed that wild strawberries were small, but these berries were really quite large, some being as large as the adult human thumb. What especially attracted my attention was the receptacle in which Master E. Smith bore them, it being of rough, dark earthenware, circular in pattern and plainly of a primitive design.

On Master Smith's telling me that he had come on this object buried in the woods, I reached the conclusion that it must be a relic of the early Mound Builders, those mysterious people who in prehistoric times inhabited this our continent.

A discovery so interesting at once induced a train of thought. Seating myself on my sofa pillow, I bade the boys gather about me, and I then gave an impromptu discourse on the subject of this vanished race, meantime holding in my hands the earthenware vessel and occasionally elevating it in illustration as I described the customs and habits of the Mound Builders so far as known.

Thus by easy stages I progressed onward and downward through the ages to their successors and inheritors, the red men, or copper-colored aborigines, formerly so numerously encountered

in this hemisphere, but now reduced to a diminishing remnant, sequestered mainly in the Far West, though with small reservations yet remaining, I believe, in certain of our Eastern States, notably New York and North Carolina.

With his large blue eyes fixed on my face Master Pope listened with the utmost gravity and attention to my remarks, which behavior was in contrast to that of his four associates, who seemed to derive food for subdued laughter from what was being said. I am often at a loss to fathom the causes which originate outbursts of levity on the part of our growing youth; and so it was in this instance.

Carried on and on by the manifold reflections and absorbing interest attached to my theme, I was surprised to observe that the sun had declined far down the western horizon. Rising to my feet with some difficulty, for the unwonted exertions of the day had created a stiffness of the limbs, I said, in effect, this:

"And now, Young Nuts of America—for here in the remote depths of the woods, far remote from any human habitation, I feel that I may apply to one and all the secret appellation we chose for our private communions—now, my Young Nuts, playtime is over and worktime has come. See, the hour of evening draws on apace. Night impends, or will indubitably do so shortly. In anticipation of our first night spent beneath

the starry stars, with only Heaven's blue vault for a canopy, let us forget the petty annoyances which have in a measure marred our first day. Did I say marred? No; not that—for these things should be but object lessons teaching us to profit by them, to perfect ourselves in woodcraft. So let us be merry, care-free and bright.

"If you will but replenish our camp fire I, for my part, shall take one of these plump wild fowl, or woodcock, which have fallen before the prowess of our doughty huntsman and fellow member, Master Pope, and, without the use of pot or pan, shall prepare for you a true wildwood dish, of the most delicious and delicate character imaginable. So, fall to, Young Nuts of America—fall to with a will—and that right gladly!"

Leaving them to their employment, I repaired to the shore of the lake and, after mastering a somewhat natural repugnance, I made with my hands a mortar or paste of thick clay, in which I encased the black woodcock. Try as I might, though, I could not give to the object thus treated a graceful or finished appearance. Finally, despairing of producing in it an outward resemblance of tidiness, I returned to the camp fire, placed the completed product in the heart of the flames, and retired a few feet to await its completion.

In twenty minutes I judged the food should be quite done, but retaining withal its natural

savors and juices: so at the expiration of that time, by using a stick I drew it forth from its fiery bed and, when the mass had sufficiently cooled broke away the earthen covering, while about me my young compatriots clustered in eager anticipation.

For the reader's sake, and for my own as well, I shall pass hurriedly over the dénouement. Suffice it to say, either the clay used by me had not been of the proper consistency or this species of woodcock was not adapted by nature for being cooked after this fashion. None of us—not even Master E. Smith, in whom I had previously remarked an unfailing appetite—cared to indulge in the dish. Indeed, it was not until I had removed the unsightly and gruesome object—these are the only adjectives that properly describe it—to a point considerably remote from our camping place that I deemed myself to be sufficiently revived to join the others in a frugal supper consisting of the remaining sandwiches and a slice apiece of lemon-jelly cake.

The meal, simple though it was, progressed slowly by reason of the frequent presence of ants in the viands—principally small reddish ants of a lively disposition, though some large black ants were also observed. Again, at the conclusion of the supper, my thoughts turned with intense longing to tea.

It had been contemplated that the evening should be spent in a ring about our camp fire,

singing songs and glees and old familiar melodies; but the oncoming of darkness dispelled in me all desire to uplift the voice in melodious outpourings. The thickening of the shadows along the turf, the spectral gleaming of the lake between the trunks of the intervening trees, the multiplying of mysterious and disquieting night noises, the realization that we were isolated in the depths of the forest—all these things had a dispiriting influence on my thoughts.

In addition, the mosquitoes proved exceedingly pernicious in their activities and in their numbers as well. The cool of the evening appeared but to give zest and alacrity to their onslaughts. Under their attacks my companions bore up blithely—in sooth, I have naught but admiration for the commendable fortitude displayed by those gallant youths throughout—but I suffered greatly in various parts of my anatomy, notably my face, neck, hands and knees.

In the absence of authoritative information on the subject I hesitate to commit myself firmly to the definite assertion, but I feel warranted in the assumption that there can be no mosquitoes in the Tyrol, else the Tyrolese, albeit a hardy race, would assuredly have modified their tribal dress in such a way so as to extend the stockings higher up or the trousers lower down.

Even at the risk of destroying the historical

verities, I now regretted exceedingly that I had not of my own initiative altered my costume in such a way as to better protect the joints of the knees.

At a comparatively early hour I gave the signal for retiring and each one sought his couch of fragrant balsam. After exchanging boyish confidences in half-whispered undertones for some time, and occasionally breaking forth into smothered fits of laughter, my followers presently slept.

My own rest, however, was of a most broken and fragmentary character. A variety of reasons contributed to this: the chill; the sense of loneliness and, as it were, of aloofness; the mosquitoes, which continued to hold, as the saying goes, high carnival; the lack of suitable food; my depression of spirit; and my bodily discomforts—to cite a few of the principal causes.

In addition to being racked in practically all of my various members, blistered as to hands and feet, and having a very painful scratch on my nose, I was exceedingly sunburned. I failed to mention this detail earlier. I am naturally of a light, not to say fair, complexion, and the walk of the morning had caused my skin to redden and smart to a more excruciating extent than I remember to have ever been the case on any similar occasion.

I am forced to the conclusion that the pleasure to be derived from sleeping on a bed

of spruce or hemlock boughs has been greatly overestimated by those who have written and spoken with such enthusiasm on the topic. To me the prickly, scratchy sensation imparted by contact with the evergreen was such as to counterbalance the delights of inhaling its tonic and balsamic fragrance.

Likewise, until a late hour my blanket kept slipping or sliding off my recumbent form, exposing me to the rigors of the night wind. No sooner did I draw it snugly about my shivering form than it would crawl—crawl is exactly the word—it would crawl off again. Finally, in feeling about to ascertain if possible the reason for this, my fingers encountered a long string, which was securely affixed to a lower corner of my covering.

In the morning, on my mentioning this curious circumstance, Master Pope spoke up and informed me that, being roused during the night and noting that I was experiencing great difficulty in keeping properly covered, he had quietly affixed a string to a lower corner of the blanket in the hope of anchoring it the more firmly in position. More than ever my soul went out to him in gratitude for the thoughtfulness of his act, even though it had failed of its desired effect.

Overborne and spent with sheer weariness I must have dropped off finally; probably I slept for some hours. Shortly before the dawning I wakened with a start and sat up, then

instantly laid myself down again and at the same time placed my hands on my bosom to stay the rapid beating of my heart; for I had become instantly aware of the immediate proximity of some large creature. There was a rustling of the bushes, the sound drawing ever nearer and nearer; there was a sniffing noise, frequently increasing to a snort. With my eyes above the upper hem of my blanket I strained my vision in the direction from which the disturbance proceeded. To my agitation I perceived in the grayish gloom a large, slowly shifting black bulk, distant but a few paces from me. Naturally, I thought of bears.

In this emergency, I may say, in all modesty, that I retained my entire self-possession. Extending wide my arms in a threatening gesture I uttered the first exclamation that entered my mind. In a tense but intimidating tone of voice I said "Shoo! Shoo!" repeating the ejaculation with emphasis until, to my relief, the creature moved off into the thickets and came no more, being daunted, doubtless, by my aggressive and determined mien.

For reasons I deemed amply sufficient I did not rise to hasten the retreat of the invading beast, nor did I waken my slumbering young companions. I reflected that, as their guide and protector, it was my duty to spare them all possible uneasiness. Inspired by this thought, therefore, I made no subsequent mention of the adventure; but on undertaking

a private investigation some time after daylight I found the remaining wild strawberries were all gone; the receptacle that had contained them lay overturned and empty on the ground.

Recalling then that bears are reputed to be excessively fond of sweet things I put two and two together and by this deductive process I confirmed my earlier suspicions. It had indeed been a bear! And what, but for my presence of mind, might have been the dire results? I could with difficulty repress a shudder. But I anticipate myself by some hours. We will go back to the time of the nocturnal, or perhaps I should say prematutinal, visitation.

Made abnormally wakeful by that which had just occurred, I remained for a considerable time retired well down under the covering as regards my person, but with my eyes open and every sense on the alert. Eventually, however, my vigilance relaxed and I seemed to drift off; and I remained wrapped in fitful slumber until reawakened by a persistent pattering on my blanket. It would appear that for some time past rain had been falling. I was quite damp and my limbs were much chilled, and I had already begun to develop certain unfailing signs of a severe cold in the head—a malady to which I am subject.

The rain soon ceased, however; and, beyond confirming the evidence of the bear's visit as just stated, nothing further marked our rising except my discovery that in tossing about dur-

ing the night I had broken both the crystals of my eyeglasses.

Breakfast was far, oh! far from being a cheerful meal, consisting as it did of water from the lake and the crumbled, ant-ridden fragments of the lemon-jelly layer cake. Once more the thought of a steaming hot cup of tea came to me with compelling insistency, provoking an almost overpowering longing for the comforts of some roofed and walled domicile, howsoever humble. I shall not deny that at this moment the appurtenances and conveniences of modern civilization appealed to me with an intensity hard to describe in language.

Moreover, I was forced to the conclusion that, because of circumstances over which we had no control, our outing thus far had in a number of its most material aspects been far from an unqualified triumph.

Yet so well did I conceal my innermost sentiments from my juvenile companions that soon, in response to my smiling looks and apt remarks, they were crying out with laughter—indeed, responding with resounding guffaws to my every sally. When I tell you my countenance was quite covered over with blisters, where not disfigured by the welts inflicted by the venomed darts of the mosquitoes, you will perhaps more readily understand what these efforts to assume a buoyant bearing and a happy expression cost me.

Shortly after finishing the last of the lemon-

jelly cake the five youngsters manifested an inclination to fare away into the forest on a joint journey of exploration. I did not seek to dissuade them—rather, I encouraged them and by all the means in my power expedited their departure; for, in truth, I longed for a time to be alone. I hoped, in the silence and solitude of these trackless wilds, to formulate suitable and reasonable excuses for cutting our outing short and returning before nightfall to the several places of our habitation, there at our leisure to plan another expedition under what, I fondly trusted, would be more favorable auspices.

Furthermore, I sought an opportunity for taking in privacy an extensive swimming lesson. Since the afternoon before I had felt my technic in swimming was deficient, and I was determined to persevere in rehearsals of the various evolutions until I had become letter perfect. Lastly, I desired to give my cold a treatment in accordance with an expedient that had just occurred to me.

No sooner had the lads scampered away, making the vast grove ring amain to their acclaims, than I began my preparations. Ordinarily, when afflicted by a catarrhal visitation, it is my habit to use for alleviation cubeb cigarettes. Having none of these about me and having in some way mislaid my sole pocket handkerchief, I now hoped to check the streaming eyes—and nose—and soothe the other symp-

toms of the complaint by inhaling the aromatic smoke of burning balsam.

I placed many sprigs of cedar on the camp fire. Immediately a thick, black cloud rose. A short distance away, on a flat stretch of turf, I spread my blanket, placing in the center of it my pink sofa pillow. Midway between fire and blanket I deposited the earthen relic that had contained the wild strawberries, having previously filled it with water from the lake. I state these things circumstantially because all this has a bearing on what was shortly to ensue.

All things being arranged to my satisfaction, I proceeded to go through the following routine: First, stretching myself prostrate and face downward on the blanket, with the central portion of my person resting on the sofa pillow as a partial prop or support, I would count aloud "One—two—three—go!" and then perform the indicated movements of Swimming Lesson Number One, striking out simultaneously with my arms and lower limbs.

When wearied by these exertions I would rise, and visiting the fire would bend forward over it, inhaling the fumes and vapors until suffocation was imminent, anon returning to the blanket to resume my swimming exercises; but in going and in coming I would halt to lave my face, hands and knees in the cooling water contained in the receptacle.

I imagine, without knowing definitely, that

I had been engaged in these occupations for perhaps half an hour, and felt that I had made commendable progress in my swimming. At a moment when I was extended prone on the blanket, counting rapidly as I mastered the breast stroke, that subtle, subconscious instinct possessed by all higher and more sensitive organisms suddenly warned me that I was no longer alone—that alien eyes were bent on me.

Suspending my movements I reared myself on my knees and peered about me this way and that. Immediately an irrepressible tremor ran through my system. Directly behind me, armed with a dangerous pitchfork and maintaining an attitude combining at once defence and attack, was a large, elderly, whiskered man, roughly dressed and of a most disagreeable cast of countenance.

At the same moment I observed, stealing softly on me from an opposite direction, a younger man of equally formidable aspect; and, to judge by certain of his facial attributes, the son of the first intruder. I shortly afterward ascertained that they were indeed father and offspring. The younger marauder bore a large, jagged club and carried a rope coiled over his arm.

I will not deny that trepidation beset me. What meant the presence of this menacing pair here in the heart of the forest? What meant their stealthy advance, their weapons, their wild looks, their uncouth appearance?

Assuredly these boded ill. Perhaps they were robbers, outlaws, felons, contemplating overt acts on my life, limbs and property! Perhaps they were escaped maniacs! With a sinking of the heart I recalled having heard that the Branch State Asylum for the Insane was situated but a few short miles distant from Hatchersville!

It may have been that my cheeks paled, and when I spoke my voice perchance quivered; but I trust that in all other respects my demeanor in that trying moment was calm, cool and collected. I meant to temporize with these intruders—to soften their rough spirits by sweetness and gentleness of demeanor.

"Good morning!" I said in an affable and friendly tone, bowing first to one and then to the other. "Is it not, on the whole, a pleasant morning after the refreshing showers that have fallen?"

Instead of responding in kind to my placating overtures, the attitude of the whiskered man became more threatening than ever. He took several steps forward, holding his pitchfork before him, tines presented, until he loomed almost above my kneeling form; and he then hailed his accomplice, saying, as nearly as I recall his language:

"Come on, son! We've got him surrounded! He can't git away now! He's our meat!"

My heart now sank until it could sink no more. I was palpitant with apprehension, as

who similarly placed would not have been? Their meat! The meaning of the sinister phrase was unmistakable. These must indeed be maniacs of a most dangerous type!

"Young feller," continued the elderly man, fixing his glaring eyes full on me, "before we go any farther with this little job, would you mind tellin' me, jest for curiosity, whut you was doin' jest now down on that there sofa pillow?"

In this matter, at least, I could have no wish or intent to deceive him.

"Sir, I was taking a swimming lesson," I said with simple courtesy.

"A which?" he said as though not hearing me aright.

"A swimming lesson," I repeated plainly, or as plainly as I could considering my agitation and the fact that the cold in my head had noticeably thickened my utterance, making it well-nigh impossible for me to give the proper inflection to certain of the aspirates and penultimates.

"Oh, yes," he said; "I see, a—a—swimming lesson. Well, that certainly is a mighty cute idee."

"I am glad you agree with me," I said. "And now, my good fellows, if you have any business of your own to attend to—elsewhere—I should be more than pleased if you proceeded on your way and left me undisturbed. I have much to engage my mind at present, as you may have noted."

"Oh, there ain't no hurry," he said. "I figger we'll all be goin' away from here purty soon."

At this moment the son checked his advance and, stooping, raised aloft the same earthenware vessel of which repeated mention has heretofore been made.

"Here she is, all right, dad!" was his cryptic statement. "I guess we never made no mistake in comin' here."

The father then addressed me.

"Mister," he said, "mout I enquire where you got that there crock?"

"That, my good sir," I informed him, "is not a crock. It is a Mound Builder's relic, unearthed but yesterday in the forest primeval."

"In the forest which?"

"The forest primeval," I enunciated with all the distinctness of which I was capable.

"And whut, if anythin', have you been doin' with it beside anointin' them features of yourn in it?" Again it was the father who spoke.

"It formerly contained wild strawberries," I answered, "some of which were consumed for food, and the rest of which were carried away under cover of nightfall by a bear."

He stared at me.

"A bear?" he reiterated blankly

"Certainly," I said; "undoubtedly a bear—I myself saw it. A large, dark bear."

"And whut about this here?" he continued,

now beholding for the first time the remaining woodcock, which hung from the limb of a low tree, and pointing toward it, "Is that there a Mound Builder's chicken?"

"Assuredly not," I said. "That is a white woodcock. There was also a black woodcock, presumably a mate of this one; but it—it has been disposed of. The pair were slain yesterday with bow and arrow in the adjacent depths of the woodland, which is their customary habitat."

You will note that I constantly refrained from mentioning my youthful compatriots. Did I dare reveal that I had companions, and by so doing expose those helpless lads to the unbridled fury of these maniacal beings, filled with the low cunning and insatiable curiosity of the insane? No; a thousand times, no! Rather would I perish first. At all hazards I would protect them—such was my instantaneous determination.

"I git you," replied the bearded man, his tone and manner changing abruptly from the truculent and threatening to the soothing. "You was takin' a private lesson in plain and fancy swimmin' on a pink sofa cushion; and that there ancient and honorable milk crock was willed to you by the Mound-buildin' Aztecs; and a big bear come in the night and et up your wild strawberries—which was a great pity, too, seein' they're worth thirty cents a quart right this minute on the New York market; and you killed them two pedi-

greed Leghorn woodcocks with a bow and arrows in the forest—the forest whutever you jest now called it. Jest whut are you, anyway?"

"By profession I am a clergyman," I answered.

"And do all the members of your persuasion wear them little sailor suits or is it confined to the preachers only?" he demanded.

I gathered that this coarse reference applied to my attire.

"This," I told him, "is the uniform or garb of an organization known as the Young Nuts of America. I am the Chief Nut."

"I can't take issue with you here," he said with a raucous laugh. "And now, Chief, jest one thing more: Would you mind tellin' us whut your aim was in holdin' your nose over that there brush fire a bit ago?"

"My head has been giving me some trouble," I said. "I was curing myself with the aid of the smoke."

"One minute a nut and the next minute a ham," he murmured, half to himself. Dropping his pitchfork, he stretched his hands toward me. "I s'pose," he added, "it ain't no use to ask you when you got out?"

In a flash it came to me—I had often read that the victims of a certain form of mania imagined all others to be insane. My plain and straightforward answers to his vague and rambling interrogations had failed of the desired effect. Being themselves mad, they thought me mad. It was a horrifying situation.

I rose to my feet—I had been kneeling throughout this extraordinary interview—with a confused thought of eluding their clutches and fleeing from them. In imagination I already saw my murdered form hidden in the trackless wilds.

"No, you don't!" exclaimed the whiskered man, placing violent and detaining hands on me. "That's all right," he continued, as the son closed in on me: "I kin handle the little killdee by myself. . . . Now, sonny," he went on, again directing himself to me as I struggled and writhed, helpless in his grasp, "you come along with me!"

"Hold on!" called the son. "There's a lot of other stuff here—blankets and truck. He's been makin' quite a collection."

"Never mind," bade his parent, roughly turning me about and from behind propelling my resisting form violently forward. "I reckin they was gifts from the Mound Builders, too. We'll come back later on and sort out the plunder."

As I was shoved along I endeavored to explain. I exclaimed; I cried out; I entreated them to stop and to hearken. My pleadings were of no avail and, I am constrained to believe, would have been of no avail even had not distress and agitation rendered me to an extent incoherent. My abductors only urged me onward through the woods at great speed.

"Gee! Hear him rave, dad!" I heard the son pant from behind me.

Merciful Providence! Now their warped and perverted mentalities translated my speech into ravings!

Almost immediately, as it seemed to me, we emerged from the forest into a ploughed field; and but a short distance away I beheld a human domicile—in short, a farmhouse. Filled with sudden relief when I realized that a civilized habitation stood in such hitherto unsuspected proximity to our late camping place, and instantly possessed with a great and uncontrollable craving to reach this haven of refuge and claim the protection of its inhabitants, I wrested myself free from the bearded man with one mighty effort, leaving my flowing collar in his hands, and at top speed set off across the field, crying out as I ran: "Help! Help! Succor! Assistance!" or words to that effect.

My flight continued but a few yards. I was overtaken and felled to the earth, my captors thereupon taking steps to effectually restrain me in the free exercise of my limbs and bodily movements. This being one of the most acutely distressing features of the entire experience I shall forego further details, merely stating that they used a rope.

It was at this juncture that the powers of connected thought and lucid speech deserted me. I retain an indistinct recollection of being borne bodily into a farm dwelling, of being confronted by a gaunt female who, disregarding my frantic efforts to explain all, persisted in

listening only to the rambling accounts of my abductors, and who, on hearing from them their confused version of what had transpired, retreated to a distance and refused to venture nearer until my bonds had been reinforced with a strap.

Following this I recall vaguely being given to drink of a glass containing milk—milk of a most peculiar odor and pungent taste. Plainly this milk had been drugged; for though in my then state of mind I was already bordering on delirium, yet an instant after swallowing the draught my faculties were miraculously restored to me. I spoke rationally—indeed, convincingly; but, owing to an unaccountable swelling of my tongue, due no doubt to the effects of the drug, my remarks to the biased ears of those about me must have sounded inarticulate, not to say incoherent. However, I persisted in my efforts to be understood until dizziness and a great languor overcame me entirely.

A blank ensued—I must have swooned.

I shall now draw this painful narrative to a close, dismissing with merely a few lines those facts that in a garbled form have already reached the public eye through the medium of a ribald and disrespectful press—how my youthful companions, returning betimes to our camping place and finding me gone, and finding also abundant signs of a desperate struggle, hastened straightway to return home by the

first train to spread the tidings that I had been kidnapped; how search was at once instituted; how, late that same evening, after running down various vain clues, my superior, the Reverend Doctor Tubley, arrived at Hatchersville aboard a special train, accompanied by a volunteer posse of his parishioners and other citizens and rescued me, semi-delirious and still fettered, as my captors were on the point of removing me, a close prisoner, to the Branch State Asylum for the Insane at Pottsburg, twenty miles distant, in the deluded expectation of securing a reward for my apprehension; of how explanations were vouchsafed, showing that while I, with utter justification, had regarded them as lunatics, they, in their ignorance and folly, had, on the other hand, regarded me as being mentally afflicted; and how finally, being removed by careful hands to my place of residence, I remained a constant invalid, in great mental and bodily distress, for a period of above a fortnight.

As is well known, my first act on being restored to health was to resign the assistant rectorship of St. Barnabas'. And having meantime been offered the chair of history and astronomy of Fernbridge Seminary for Young Ladies at Lover's Leap in the State of New Jersey I have accepted and am departing on the morrow for my new post, trusting, in the classic shades and congenial atmosphere of that

well-established academy of learning, to forget the unhappy memories now indissolubly associated in my mind with the first and last camping expedition of the Young Nuts of America.

I close with an added word of gratitude and affection for those five gallant lads, Masters Horrigan, Pope, Ferguson, E. Smith and H. Smith—but particularly Master Pope, to whom I feel I indeed owe much.

(Signed) Very respectfully,

Roscoe Titmarsh Fibble, D.D.